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SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS: A NEW COLD WAR?

William G. Hyland

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PREFACE

The essay that constitutes the text of this report is an interpretive account of Soviet-American relations over the past few decades, with emphasis on the more recent period. No original research has been undertaken; rather, the reconstruction of different periods and issues is based on the author's personal experience and views, drawing in part on his participation in some of the events since 1969. Mr. Hyland's perspective, according to his own testimony, has been and remains shaped by his personal experience.

This account was written with support from The Ford Foundation. In late 1978 the Foundation provided grants to The Rand Corporation and several university centers for research and training in international security and arms control. At Rand, the grant is supporting a diverse program. In the Rand Graduate Institute, which offers a doctorate in policy analysis, the grant is contributing to student fellowships for dissertation preparation, curriculum development, workshops and tutorials, and a series of visiting lecturers. In Rand's National Security Research Division, the Ford-sponsored projects are designed to extend beyond the immediate needs of government sponsors of research by investigating long-term or emerging problems and by developing and assessing new research methodologies. The grant also is being used to fund the publication of relevant sponsored research that would otherwise not be disseminated to the general public.

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SUMMARY

The conduct of relations with the Soviet Union has been the natural focal point for American foreign policy since World War II. In the formulation of that policy, two major questions have bedeviled policy-makers: What are Soviet intentions? What are the prospects for a favorable evolution inside the USSR? These were the two issues around which the original policy of containment was constructed in the early 1950s. At that time it was believed that Soviet policy reflected a combination of traditional Russian expansionism and Marxist-Leninist revolutionary aspirations. But it was also argued that if contained over a sufficiently long period, the failure of the Soviet Union to achieve its expansionist goals would induce a benevolent evolutionary process.

The corollary of containment was that it was necessary for the United States to create a position of strength before entering into negotiations with the USSR. Thus, in the very period of America's greatest military predominance and nuclear monopoly, its diplomacy was sterile, in part because of the continuing hope and expectation of change within the USSR. But even as containment weakened and collapsed and the post-Stalin "thaw" in U.S.-Soviet relations began, the United States was still reluctant to open serious negotiations with Moscow. The hope for substantial changes in the USSR, however, grew and was reflected in a more and more sophisticated analysis of Soviet intentions. In particular, it was believed that both sides had certain common interests, especially in arms control and in some degree of economic accommodation. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and the overthrow of Khrushchev in 1964 gave a new impetus to speculation that the USSR might be entering a stage of major internal change or "transformation" into a less threatening power.

In fact, during the latter 1960s the USSR settled down into an internal conservatism coupled with a determination to build its military position. Even so, there was a strong American interest in continuing the search for a "key" to unlock Soviet-American relations. In the process, a much more complex analysis of Soviet policy was developed. The value of economic relations, the impact of factional struggles in the Kremlin, and the influence of the Soviet conflict with China all suggested that the USSR might have a common interest in a relaxation with the United States. The most important factor, however, was the emergence of a new strategic balance between the United States and the USSR. It was generally believed that a rough equality between the

two powers offered an optimal moment for regulating strategic competition and stabilizing the relationship. This was the overwhelming argument for strategic arms limitation talks—SALT. And it was a fitting irony that the period of détente began with the inauguration of the SALT talks and ended with their suspension a decade later.

Détente, broadly defined, of course, began well before the SALT talks; indeed, its origin can be traced to President Kennedy's American University address of June 1963. The general trend of reducing tensions continued in the period of President Johnson's "peaceful engagement," which yielded some results but collapsed under the weight of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The Nixon-Kissinger approach to managing U.S.-Soviet relations differed in certain important respects from the previous effort. There was skepticism that any general settlement could be reached with the USSR, and hence, there was a far greater interest in limited, specific agreements. There was also a strong disposition to decouple expectations of internal Soviet changes from foreign policy objectives. Negotiations did not have to await a change of heart in the Kremlin but could be pursued on their merits, provided there was a general "linkage" between negotiated agreements and Soviet actions within a general framework understood by all participants. This approach was reinforced by the domestic pressures in the United States to end the Vietnam war and to enlist the USSR in the effort.

The general American strategy adopted in 1969-70 led to a series of initial agreements, but in the end the strategy could not be fully tested. Soviet-American relations were bombarded with pressures: Watergate progressively weakened the Nixon Administration's ability to conduct negotiations at a crucial juncture in 1973-74; the Middle East war raised suspicion of Soviet perfidy and created a domestic political backlash in the United States; SALT negotiations faltered after the Ford-Brezhnev summit at Vladivostok; economic incentives for restrained Soviet conduct were withdrawn by the Congress in early 1975. The fall of Saigon in the spring of 1975 and the attacks against the Helsinki conference on security cooperation in Europe added to a growing American disillusionment with détente. And finally, the American domestic consensus that supported the original effort disintegrated. When the crucial test came in Angola, the U.S. Congress for the first time in the post-war period recoiled in the face of a major Soviet challenge. The result was a serious American defeat, which stimulated an aggressive Soviet global offensive.

As for Soviet motives, one additional reason for pursuing a more assertive policy was Moscow's failure to turn the détente with the United States against China. Throughout the early 1970s the Soviet leaders probed U.S. willingness to collaborate against China. As it

became clear that the United States would not join such an enterprise, Soviet interest in détente began to wane. And, indeed, when it later appeared that the United States was joining with China and Japan against the USSR, Moscow acted vigorously to counter the formation of this coalition by breaking out of a potential encirclement in both Afghanistan and Indochina.

This period of offensive coincided roughly with the administration of President Carter. Soviet gains were rationalized in the United States on the theory that Moscow could not achieve a permanent advance in the Third World. The corollary was that the paramount objective in U.S.-Soviet relations was to immunize the SALT process from conflicts in the Third World. The results are well known: a major American figure retrospectively summed up the situation in the phrase that SALT was buried in the sands of the Ogaden.

In any case, the period from the Angolan intervention to the Afghan invasion represents the most sustained and successful Soviet geopolitical advance since the occupation of Eastern Europe in 1945-48. The USSR, at the opening of the 1980s, had achieved a significant new strategic position, threatening the vital economic interests of its principal adversaries. Moreover, the price paid for these gains proved to be minimal; indeed, the Western response revealed the severe inhibitions created by (1) the broad expansion of economic relations with the USSR; (2) the psychological impact to the United States of the Vietnam conflict; and (3) the effects of a prolonged period of relaxed tensions in Europe.

The principal casualty of the growing American disillusionment with détente was the collapse of support for the SALT treaty. SALT proved vulnerable to the Afghan crisis in some measure because the treaty had failed to meet the expectations of its proponents. Increasingly, SALT seemed unable to produce stabilization of the strategic balance. The most intriguing negotiations (in 1974) involved a compensatory trade-off in relative U.S. and Soviet advantages in weapons systems, but failed at Nixon's final summit. The Vladivostok meeting salvaged SALT, but the premise of the rapid conclusion of an agreement could not be sustained. The Carter Administration slowed down the pace of negotiation, which had the ironic effect of undermining the value of its ultimate agreement. Seven years after the original agreement, and almost five years after Vladivostok, SALT was still addressing the prime strategic issues only at the margin. This situation, combined with some flaws in the scope and depth of the agreement, exposed to SALT critics a vulnerable flank to attack. The debate turned into an election-year contest over how to improve American defenses in order to compensate for the deficiencies of SALT—a prescription fatal to ratifying an agreement with the Soviets.

The suspension of SALT in 1980 produced a campaign debate about the future of the treaty itself; when the real issue was whether the broad process of strategic arms control could or should continue. This is still the overriding problem; unfortunately, it is beclouded by simplistic notions about the value of strategic force reductions, which unless carefully structured could prove far more dangerous than anything in SALT II. The real test for SALT will be whether it can remedy the threats to strategic instability: to reduce vulnerabilities, to regulate the introduction of new offensive systems—such as multiple launch points, to reconsider, soberly, the value of strategic defensive systems such as hard-point ABMs, and to cope with these issues in a time of accelerating technological change. In short, the entire process of negotiating strategic arms control needs to be thoroughly reexamined before proclaiming that SALT can and must be preserved in order to achieve reductions in weaponry.

Whatever the future of SALT, it is evident that 1980 marked the end of the period of détente that began in 1963. The future of Soviet-American relations was never more clouded than at the beginning of the 1980s. Containment of Soviet power has failed to a significant degree. Strategic arms control stands at a critical juncture. Military instabilities are increasing at all levels, and political instabilities are growing in areas of vital importance, especially in the Persian Gulf. The major industrial democracies remain vulnerable to economic blackmail and the divisive stresses created by this vulnerability. And the Soviet Union seems presented with a strategic “window” of opportunity to extend its gains—all of which combine to reinforce the trend toward international turbulence and instability, which, in turn, creates the conditions for a major confrontation between the United States and the USSR. Moreover, in this light it seems that no major shift in Soviet policy is likely unless and until it suffers a major setback or reversal. Two inhibiting factors, however, are the Soviet leadership succession process, which is becoming more and more uncertain, and the economic squeeze on Soviet resources. It is far from clear how these two issues will relate to each other, and what their impact will be on Soviet foreign policy.

As for the United States, it has little choice but to pursue a policy of neo-containment. Such a policy will have to cope with what is truly a global problem and it will have to do so very selectively, if only because the strain on American resources is too great for an indiscriminate containment. The starting point for a new American policy is the restructuring of the Atlantic relationship. The Soviet challenge poses new choices not merely for the United States alone; it imposes new burdens on all of the NATO allies. The so-called division of labor will have to be elaborated with some precision within a common strategic

conception, lest it becomes a slogan for unilateral, national actions. A new U.S. alliance policy, however, will carry new inhibitions on U.S. freedom of action. No security policy in the Western Alliance can be conducted on the basis of a selective European détente, but neither can the United States simply apply its own priorities and solutions—especially in strategic arms control decisions.

A similar inhibition will be created in the Far East, as the United States presses the Japanese to rearm and attempts to integrate U.S. relations with China into a policy of neo-containment—but without provoking a Sino-Soviet confrontation. Finally, a new physical and political infrastructure of security assistance in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean cannot help but influence American commitments in East Africa, the Middle East, and in South Asia. In short, U.S. commitments are expanding while the capabilities to meet those commitments are more limited than ever before and freedom of political action is increasingly constrained.

The role of negotiations with the USSR in this new period remains unclear, much as it did in the original version of containment. It would be foolish to waste time and effort debating whether to negotiate; the real issue is *what* to negotiate. Some form of a “code of conduct,” whether specific or general, written or verbal, is an inevitable part of any dialogue with the USSR. Indeed, the failure to institute agreed limits to Soviet conduct remains at the heart of profound differences between the two superpowers.

Whether there will be a genuine role for arms control is open to question. As a major vehicle for ensuring strategic stability, arms control has limited prospects. As a complementary effort to reinforcing a political accommodation, it may have greater value. In any case, it cannot and should not be the cutting edge of a new American policy.

In applying a policy of neo-containment, the fundamental question underlying the original concept for managing the U.S.-Soviet competition remains to be answered: Will there be a favorable evolution of Soviet politics that will make the USSR a tolerable participant in international relations? The most that can be said at this point is that the external and internal strains in the Soviet (and Eastern European) system are accumulating. This is a slow process, and its outcome is by no means historically determined. Meanwhile, the USSR remains a formidable adversary, and the optimal moment for Soviet expansion may be at hand. That is the present danger, and the American challenge.

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I. SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN RETROSPECT

At the end of his brief career as Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie was asked about the major challenge and dangers facing the new administration. He answered:¹

The major challenge in the foreseeable future is reading Soviet intentions. . . . Our assumptions about Soviet intentions will determine our attitude toward arms control negotiations with Russia and our relations with NATO and with Japan and others of the industrial nations of the Northern Hemisphere.

And he told the *Washington Post*:²

I can't think of a question I found more troublesome in these eight months than the occasions—and there were many—on which we considered what are Soviet intentions next.

The former Secretary was merely echoing what many American statesmen and other world leaders have believed; namely, that the Soviet Union is indeed a riddle wrapped in an enigma. And the search for an answer to this riddle of Soviet behavior has been central to policy formulation in the West since World War II. Indeed, a link between Soviet intentions and Western policy has been a hallmark of the period.

Until the outbreak of the Second World War and for some time thereafter, there was a strong view in Europe and America that the Soviet Union should be seen as a "revolutionary" power. In this sense, the USSR seemed largely irrelevant to the main stream of European power politics (a view that was strongly propounded by pre-war British diplomacy). As the European order collapsed, however, the emergence of the USSR as the predominant European power called for a far more penetrating examination of the nature of Soviet policy. This was by no means a purely intellectual exercise, even though a large number of intellectuals busied themselves with the subject. In fact, the new analysis was propelled by the need to answer some hard-core policy questions.

¹ *U.S. News and World Report*, January 26, 1981.

² *Washington Post*, February 1, 1981.

CONTAINMENT

A major analytical shift occurred during the war. The heavy emphasis on Soviet "revolutionary" policies and goals was tempered by a new stress on the revival of traditional Russian expansionism. George Kennan articulated key points in the new analysis. His writings are well-known, of course, and need only be noted as a base point. When he returned to the Soviet Union in 1944, Kennan was stuck by the shift away from a revolutionary bias. He wrote that Stalin's realization that the "revolution" had little chance was "indeed a change, and an important change."³ Kennan does not explain how he arrived at this insight after an absence of seven years, but he must have been impressed by the resurgence of nationalism produced by the war. He emphasized, however, that this change "did not alter the basic conception of Soviet policy, which was to increase in every way and with all possible speed the relative strength of purpose, the rivalries and differences among other powers."⁴ This was a pale forerunner of the more definitive description that was contained in the famous long telegram of February 1946 and the even more famous Mr. X article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947.⁵ By then, Kennan had isolated what he considered the essence of Soviet policy:⁶

Its political action is a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move, toward a given goal. . . . The main thing is that there should always be pressure, unceasing constant pressure, toward the desired goal.

And in the renowned line in which he described containment:

In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term patient but firm and vigilant containment of *Russian expansive tendencies*. (emphasis added)

It is of some interest to note that it was "Russian," not Soviet, expansive tendencies that were to be contained. Historic national objectives were increasingly reflected in official estimates of Soviet behavior, though they coexisted with a continuing emphasis on Communist ideology and revolutionary goals as motivating forces.⁷

³ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1967, p. 516.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ George F. Kennan, "Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4, July 1947, pp. 566-582.

⁶ Ibid., p. 575.

⁷ The eminent English historian, G. P. Gooch, summed up the classic case: "The key

In the years that followed this initial analytical formulation, the concept of expansionism became the dominant theme. In 1951, Kennan expressed a hope that some day a future Russian government would abandon, "as ruinous and unworthy, the ancient game of imperialist expansion and oppression." A decade later, in some despair, Kennan went even further:⁸

Finally, there has been the steady, persistent tendency to expansion of the real boundaries of Russian power, and particularly to a type of expansion not generally related to any discernible real and tangible needs of the country at large whether economic or military—an expansion for expansion's sake—undertaken for arbitrary and abstract reasons.

If expansionism was the accepted explanation of Soviet foreign policy, there were also important qualifications. First, there was the proposition that expansionism was manageable because its course could be importantly affected by the behavior of outside forces. Even more significant was a second conclusion: that if Soviet-Russian expansion were, in fact, contained, then an internal evolution would be produced in the USSR leading to a moderation of external behavior. In short, there was seamless web of analysis (expansionism), policy recommendation (containment), and expected result (evolution).

On the "containability" of Soviet-Russian expansionism, Kennan and others argued that an analogy between the USSR and Hitler would be highly misleading: the Soviets operated on no timetable nor according to any fixed plans. Thus, the Soviets were neither adventuristic nor schematic; while impervious to the logic of reason, they were nevertheless sensitive to the logic of force. According to Kennan: "For this reason it [the USSR] can easily withdraw and usually does—when strong resistance is encountered at any point."⁹

Kennan, of course, had made an internal upheaval in the new Soviet empire central to his argument and the general thesis was propounded by others. In late 1946, Clark Clifford, then a special adviser to President Truman, parroted Kennan's theme of containable aggressiveness in a special memorandum for the President, though

to the foreign policy of Russia throughout the centuries is the urge toward warm water ports." *Before the War: Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Longmans-Green, New York, 1942, p. 287.

⁸ George F. Kennan, "Essays in Historical Perspective," in Ivo Lederer (ed.), *Russian Foreign Policy*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1962, p. 595.

⁹ George F. Kennan, "Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4, July 1947.

emphasizing Soviet responsiveness to the inevitability of prolonged resistance.¹⁰

Our best chances of influencing the Soviet leaders consist in making it unmistakably clear that action contrary to our conception of a decent world will rebound to the disadvantage of the Soviet regime, whereas friendly and cooperative action will pay dividends. If this position can be maintained firmly enough and long enough, the logic of it must penetrate eventually into the Soviet system.

Thus at the outset of the post-war relationship, a cardinal article of faith was that while the USSR was inherently and historically an expansionist power it was nevertheless subject to "logic" and would eventually change. This general formula was not seriously challenged because: (1) to question the concept of a Soviet-Russian expansionism would have seemed hopelessly naive in the late 1940s, and (2) to suggest that the USSR would not evolve would have been hopelessly fatalistic.

Even the critique of containment more or less accepted the basic thesis that historic Russia was expansionistic and the criticism concentrated instead on the policy requirements and consequences. Walter Lippmann, in his well-known refutation of Kennan, invoked the Russian Czars as Stalin's predecessors. While attacking containment as a "strategic monstrosity".¹¹

We may now ask why the official diagnosis of Soviet conduct, as disclosed by Mr. X's article, has led to such an unworkable policy for dealing with Russia. It is, I believe, because Mr. X has neglected even to mention the fact that the Soviet Union is the successor of the Russian Empire and that Stalin is not only the heir of Marx and of Lenin but of Peter the Great, and the Czars of all the Russians.

And in these essays Lippmann concluded that the Czarist history of annexation explained:¹²

The westward expansion of the Russian frontier and the Russian sphere of influence, though always a Russian aim, was accomplished when, as, and because the Red Army defeated the German Army and advanced to the center of Europe.

¹⁰ Quoted in A. Krock, *Memoirs: Sixty Years on the Firing Line*, Funk and Wagnalls, New York, 1968, p. 468.

¹¹ Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1947, p. 23.

¹² Ibid.

Lippmann also argued, in a different presentation:¹³

The beginning of wisdom on the Russian question is, I believe, to recognize that the division between Russia and the nations of the West did not begin with Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, nor would it end if the Soviet regime were overthrown or defeated.

Lippmann's emphasis on Russian aims led to radically different policy conclusions. Whereas containment posited a long stalemate, Lippmann advocated a settlement:¹⁴

Therefore, the immediate and the decisive problem of our relations with the Soviet Union is whether, when, on what conditions the Red Army can be prevailed upon to evacuate Europe.

Lippmann's analysis raised a key strategic question: Was the West confronted by *Soviet* expansionism, i.e., a phenomenon produced by the history of the Marxist-Leninist movement and propelled by the Red Army? Or was the West confronted by traditional, historical *Russian* expansionism, albeit in a new guise?

The two major American policy papers, NSC 20/1 which analyzed Soviet intentions, and NSC 68 which prescribed policies, relied heavily on the Kennan analysis, citing the duality of Soviet policy: Russian expansionism and Soviet Communism. No great distinction was drawn, but there was a strong emphasis on the probability of major domestic change under the pressure of containment.¹⁵

On the one hand, NSC 20/1 of August 1948 assumed almost constant Soviet objectives:¹⁶

They [Soviet objectives] are very little affected by changes from war to peace. For example, Soviet territorial aims with respect to Eastern Europe, as they became apparent during the war, bore a strong similarity to the program which the Soviet Government was endeavoring to realize by measures short of war in 1939 and 1940 and in fact to certain of the strategic-political concepts which underlay Czarist policy before World War I.

¹³ Walter Lippmann, "The Rivalry of Nations," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 181, February 1948, pp. 17-20.

¹⁴ Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1947.

¹⁵ Paul Nitze, one of the participants, notes the lack of debate over Soviet intentions, since Kennan's analyses were widely accepted. John Lewis Gaddis and Paul Nitze, "NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat Reconsidered," *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Spring 1980, pp. 164-176.

¹⁶ Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis (eds.), *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy 1945-1950*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978, p. 175.

On the other hand, the main hope it seemed was that through a "long process of change and erosion," the Russian Communist movement would outlive "the impulses which had originally given it birth." Therefore, if "situations" could be created that made it not in the interest of the Soviet Union to emphasize the "elements of conflict" in relations with the outside world, then "their actions and even the tenor of their propaganda *can* be modified" (emphasis in the original). These situations, "if maintained long enough," could cause the Soviets to "observe a relative degree of moderation and caution in their dealings with Western countries."¹⁷

It was Hans Morgenthau, with his usual clarity, who performed the service in 1950 of summing up the implications inherent in differing perspectives about Soviet policy, which he reduced to three views: (1) there was no real issue between the United States and the USSR except suspicion and false propaganda, which if eliminated would lead to peaceful and normal relations; (2) the issue was one of world revolution, in which case the "evil" must be extirpated at its roots; and (3) the issue that concerned the United States in its relations with the Soviet Union was "Russian imperialism," which used world revolution as an instrument. In the latter case, "military preparations must join hands with an accommodating diplomacy, and preparing for the worst while working for a peaceful settlement becomes the order of the day."¹⁸

It is a fair criticism of U.S. foreign policy in the 1950s and 1960s that there was a major reluctance to draw these distinctions and too great an acceptance of the notion that at some early point an internal evolutionary process would begin inside the Soviet Union.

For the practical policymakers who faced a blockade of Berlin or a Korean attack, or a Hungarian revolt, it was of little interest or relevance whether the Soviets were acting out a Great Russian dream or pursuing a Bolshevik plot. The easy marriage of Soviet doctrine and Russian history persisted. The renowned British authority Hugh Seton-Watson summed up the duality concisely as late as 1966:¹⁹

Soviet foreign policy from 1917 onwards had two distinct objects, the promotion of Communist Revolution and the defense of the interests of the territorial state which was heir to the Russian Empire.

Matters changed with the appearance of Soviet dissidents, especially the slavophiles and nationalists (e.g., Solzhenitsyn), and the simul-

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 187-188.

¹⁸ Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest*, revised edition, Ark House, Ltd., New York, 1980, pp. 69-70.

¹⁹ Hugh Seton-Watson, "The Khrushchev Era", *Survey*, No. 58, January 1966, p. 187.

taneous rise of a Chinese threat. The question of *Russian* objectives versus Soviet ones began to be argued with great intensity by dissidents and émigrés. The most vigorous and polemical resentment of the Western tendency to blur Russian and Soviet expansionism is found in Aleksander Solzhenitsyn's various essays. He stresses the contrasts (as one would expect), emphasizing the implacable nature of the Communist menace and therefore the impossibility of coexistence, while pointing out that the Czar, or as he puts it, the "bad" Russia of old, "never loomed ominously over Europe, still less over America and Africa."²⁰

Eventually an ironic situation was created in which some of the more vigorous anti-Communist critics (e.g., Professor Richard Pipes) were attacked for failing to distinguish "legitimate" Russian interests from the synthetic, and therefore illegitimate, interests of the Marxist-Leninists. Strangely, the two contending schools agree that a motivating force in Soviet expansion was the lack of "legitimacy" of the Soviet leadership, but they part company over what was termed the "persistent tradition of Russian expansion." This the Russian émigrés attribute to the "monstrous ideological pressures" of Marxism-Leninism.²¹

This debate bears on the relevant policy question of whether any transformation of the Soviet Union is indeed possible. If the ideology of Marxism-Leninism is withering away, what remains? A relatively benign Russian state, or an inherently aggressive one? If Soviet power is contained, is there some reason to hope that its nature will be transformed by internal changes? Or will there be merely a brief respite in the outward thrust, as has happened during times of trouble in Russian history?

POST-CONTAINMENT

In any case, the actual policy of containment began to collapse in the mid-1950s as Khrushchev leaped the containment barriers in the Middle East and penetrated South Asia. The United States was faced with an opponent deemed to be inherently expansionist, but Washington no longer had a clear view of how to cope with such a challenge (e.g., containment vs. liberation). Ironically, the post-Stalin internal "evolution" was unfolding when the very policy of containment was fading. Gradually, however, there began to emerge the idea that relations could be developed on the basis of certain "overlapping" or common

²⁰ A. Solzhenitsyn, "Misconceptions About Russia Are a Threat to America," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 4, Spring 1980, pp. 797-834.

²¹ See the Krasnow-Pipes exchange in *Encounter*, Vol. LIV, No. 4, April 1980, p. 67-75.

interests, particularly (1) in developing economic relations between two major industrial powers and (2) in avoiding a suicidal nuclear war. Indeed, the argument was increasingly made that as the Soviet Union matured it might become more "mellow"—a descendent of the older theory of internal evolution. The operational problem was how to turn these supposed common interests into concrete policies and relevant agreements. Even as early as the death of Stalin, President Eisenhower was preoccupied with finding a means to "coexist," though the term had not come into vogue.²²

The new leadership in Russia, no matter how strong its links with the Stalin era, was not completely bound to blind obedience to the ways of a dead man. The future was theirs to make. Consequently, a major preoccupation of my mind through most of 1953 was the development of approaches to the Soviet leaders that might be at least a start toward the birth of mutual trust founded in cooperative effort—an essential relationship between the two great powers, if they and other nations were to find the way to universal peace.

The 1950s did not permit much testing of Eisenhower's ideas. First, there was also the persistent notion that the United States was still too weak to negotiate, that America needed to build its strength. Thus Churchill's interest in probing post-Stalin weaknesses was initially rejected and then deferred until the brief, atmospheric exercise in summit diplomacy in Geneva in 1955. Second, there was the "missile gap" and subsequent Khrushchevian campaigns against Berlin.

The idea of mutual, overlapping interests, however, took hold. At one extreme "convergence" enjoyed a brief vogue. The idea was that the two societies and the two economies were actually moving toward one another (converging) despite ideological differences. Such ideas were stimulated by the appearance of economic reform proposals in the USSR that stressed the "profit" motive. Also, many American observers saw a sort of state capitalism evolving in the United States. But the idea of real convergence was not seriously held and finally dissipated under the withering blasts of Leninist critiques.

What was serious and did endure, however, was a more limited version: that Soviet behavior was indeed "evolving" and that this evolution could be shaped by economic ties. The argument was that the Soviets, to solve their economic internal problems, would need and would seek Western help. Such assistance should be offered so that Moscow would then become entangled with Western exports, credits,

²² Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change: 1953-1956, The White House Years*, Doubleday and Company, New York, 1963, p. 189.

imports, etc. This process would gradually dilute Soviet expansionistic ambitions. Of course, the arguments were much more sophisticated, but this was their essence.

What was gradually emerging was a more complex analysis of Soviet policy and society that embraced a wider variety of motives. The trend was supposedly pointed toward "constructive change." This analysis was given a great impetus after the Soviet defeat in the Cuban missile crisis. An early expression of the broad theme was sounded by President Kennedy in his address at the American University in 1963, which really marked the beginning of the "détente" era.²³ At that time President Kennedy emphasized the possibility of transcending doctrinal differences:²⁴

So let us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to *our common interests* and to the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help *make the world safe for diversity*. For in the final analysis *our most basic common link* is that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.

Third: *Let us reexamine our attitude toward the cold war*, remembering that we are not engaged in a debate, seeking to pile up debating points. . . .

We must, therefore, persevere in the search for peace *in the hope that constructive changes within the Communist bloc might bring within reach solutions which now seem beyond us*. We must conduct our affairs in such a way that it becomes in the Communists' interest to agree on a genuine peace. (Emphasis added.)

POST-KHRUSHCHEV

The concept of "constructive change," as Kennedy put it, was given a sharply different turn after the overthrow of Khrushchev. The surprising coup of October 1964 precipitated a new debate among Kremlinologists who speculated widely about the "essential evolutionary process of the Soviet political system." One leading exponent of the

²³ According to a recent biographer of Dean Rusk, the Secretary was skeptical of the Soviets and never surrendered his conviction that the Soviet Union was forever "committed to world revolution." But he came to accept "the sincerity of expressed Soviet desires for peace with the United States." Warren L. Cohen, *Dean Rusk*, Cooper Square Publications, New Jersey, 1980, p. 162.

²⁴ Commencement Address at American University in Washington, D.C., June 10, 1963, in *John F. Kennedy, Public Papers of the President of the United States, 1963*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1964, pp. 459-464.

theory of significant change was Zbigniew Brzezinski, who, in fact, launched the debate in an article in early 1966.²⁵ His thesis was that the Soviet body politic was in danger of "degeneration" produced by the strains of trying to maintain a totalitarian political system to manage an increasingly complex, technical-industrial society. As a consequence of this strain there was a growing gap between the political regime and Soviet society; the dangers of "degeneration" could be avoided by several expedients: introducing a broader representation of social talent within the top leadership, institutionalization of a chief officer (to avoid a succession crisis), and increasing social participation in politics, which in turn would increase the need for institutionalization. Introducing reforms along this line would, of course, "eventually lead to a profound transformation of the Soviet system":²⁶

In the meantime the progressive transformation of the bureaucratic Communist dictatorship into a more pluralistic and institutionalized political system—even though it's still a system of one party rule—seems essential if its degeneration is to be averted.

The prospect of a progressive change in the Soviet Union was so stimulating and intriguing that even hard-headed analysts, such as Robert Conquest, were carried away by the vision of "genuine elections within the Party and/or the gradual transformation of the perfectly adequate constitutional forms of the Soviet state into reality."²⁷ There was even speculation of a "violent explosion," or "sudden and catastrophic" change. Another observer, Professor Barghoorn, saw a nationalistic coalition emerging, but Brzezinski concluded the debate on a more even-handed note by calling attention to the "entrenched resistance of the political system that is uneasy with its past and uncertain of its future."²⁸

This particular debate was overtaken by events. Soviet politics, far from erupting, gradually settled down into a conservative mode; the system did not degenerate, nor was there a clear trend toward pluralism. Indeed, the the main tendencies were in the opposite direction toward a more orthodox and traditional regeneration of the system, at least to the extent that the older power centers—the party apparatus, the military, and the heavy industrialists—made a definite and strong comeback from the turmoil of Khrushchev.

²⁵ Z. Brzezinski, "The Soviet Political System: Transformation or Degeneration," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 15, January-February 1966, pp. 1-15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷ Robert Conquest, "Immobilism and Decay," *Problems of Communism*, September/October 1966, p. 37.

²⁸ For this debate, see the 1966 issues of *Problems of Communism*.

Nevertheless, the change of leadership did have the effect of stimulating greater Western interest in the internal determinants of Soviet foreign policy, especially those that might have some moderating effect on Soviet behavior abroad. Many observers emphasized the need for a broader approach to the analysis of Soviet policy. Thus Marshall Shulman, then at Columbia University, stated the case in terms of a shift toward a more mature totalitarianism.²⁹

For our present purpose, which is to consider the relationship between transformations in the Soviet system and the evolution of the Cold War, we begin by reminding ourselves how intricate is the society we are trying to analyze. . . .

In response to a number of factors in international politics, the Soviet leadership has been brought to the view that greater emphasis upon the further development of its economy is a fundamental key to the enlargement of its power and influence in the world. . . .

Necessarily . . . practical and ideological measures for the easing of internal tensions have been accompanied by a commitment to international peace as a positive motivation for popular support. . . . Soviet developments oblige us to regard the Soviet system as passing into some mature form of totalitarianism.

Alexander Dallin argued that while domestic inputs were not necessarily decisive, they were probably as valid as foreign factors in analyzing Soviet conduct:³⁰

Soviet foreign policy has usually been analyzed in terms of the leaders' objectives. . . . Far less attention has been paid to another complex of variables which shapes Soviet policy—those internal to the USSR. . . . While it would be an oversimplification to think of Soviet foreign policy as purely and simply a dependent variable of domestic inputs, such an approach might well be a lesser error than to assume (as was generally done in the Stalin era and is often still an operative assumption) that Soviet leaders are immune to various constraints, diverse opinions, and political pressures rising out of their own polity and society.

In this same collection of essays, a general point by the editors

²⁹ Marshall D. Shulman, *Beyond the Cold War*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1966, p. 34.

³⁰ Alexander Dallin, "Soviet Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics, A Framework for Analysis," in Erik P. Hoffman and Frederic J. Fleron, Jr. (eds), *The Conduct of Soviet Foreign Policy*, Aldine-Atherton, Chicago, 1971, p. 36.

(Hoffman and Fleron) was that while the two societies were not converging there was a convergence of interests:

The internal characteristics of the Soviet and American political systems are probably not becoming increasingly similar or "converging." But there does seem to be an increasing convergence of mutual interest in international affairs—that is, there are more and more areas where Soviet-American cooperation is in fact, and is perceived as being, mutually beneficial. . . .

Another observer, Robert C. Tucker, argued that a considerable degree of rapprochement had already been achieved:³¹

One of the most significant realignments of the recent past, East and West, is a rapprochement between the United States and Soviet Russia, an uncertain move by the two military superpowers and erstwhile cold-war adversaries into limited collaborative relations for purposes of maintaining international peace and security. . . . We should not minimize the potential importance of the emergence in the post-Stalin era of a new Soviet-American relationship, the replacement of the old cold-war antagonism with a more complex and constructive interaction in which competition and cooperation are conjoined.

A NEW FRAMEWORK

Out of this general reappraisal of the post-Khrushchev period, three elements were greatly strengthened and given new importance: (1) the value of economic relations, (2) the impact of the struggle between factions in Moscow, and (3) the Sino-Soviet conflict.

1. *Trade.* A major expansion of U.S.-Soviet trade was widely seen as the price of entry into the process of moderating the Soviet Union's general policies. In 1968 Congressional hearings were held on the question of whether to renew the Export Control Act and the issue was carried over into the new Republican Administration in 1969. An almost classic case for using trade to encourage an evolutionary process was expressed by two prominent Democratic Senators, Muskie and Mondale, who issued a statement on April 22, 1969, concerning the advisability of expanding trade:³²

³¹ Robert C. Tucker, "United States-Soviet Cooperation: Incentives and Obstacles," in Erik P. Hoffman and Frederic J. Fleron, Jr. (eds.), *The Conduct of Soviet Foreign Policy*, Aldine-Atherton, Chicago, 1971, pp. 294, 295.

³² Remarks of Senators Muskie and Mondale on Introduction of the Export Expansion and Regulation Act, S. 1940, April 22, 1969, in *Export Expansion and Regulation*, Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Finance of the Committee on Bank-

Also, our relations with the Soviet Union and other nations of Eastern Europe have changed. . . . We have moved to the belief that our problems and differences can, and ultimately must be solved by constant attempts to effect a meeting of the minds. We must make these attempts over the conference table and in the market place—wherever and whenever we can meet with our East European counterparts . . . to discuss our mutual interests and concerns. In order to expand this dialog, it is necessary for us to actively seek ways and means to increase our contacts and dealings with Eastern Europe. *By taking advantage of every opportunity to meet, talk and deal, we should be able to accelerate what is going to be a long and laborious process to eventual understanding and accord.* (Emphasis added.)

Theodore Sorensen argued that:³³

The present system prevents us from engaging the Soviet Union in the kinds of contact, exchange and experience that would make difficult the severing of relations required to wage open warfare against us, make more plausible our contention that we are not bent on the eradication of all Communist nations, and make more possible an atmosphere of increased communication and decreased tension in which dangerous miscalculations are less likely and successful negotiations are more likely.

A long statement supporting trade for its political benefits was made by the former Undersecretary of State, Nicholas Katzenbach, who even saw the Czech invasion in terms of vindicating the effort to promote liberalization in Eastern Europe:³⁴

From the viewpoint of national security, it is hard for me to see how the export of non-strategic goods could either directly or indirectly strengthen the military capacity of Communist countries of Eastern Europe. Larger imports from the United States would almost certainly expand the consumer sector, not the military. I do not believe that even the tragedy of Czechoslo-

ing and Currency, U.S. Senate, 91th Congress, First Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1969, p. 2.

³³ Statement before Senate International Finance Subcommittee, April 23, 1969, in *Export Expansion and Regulation*, Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Finance of the Committee on Banking and Currency, U.S. Senate, 91th Congress, First Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1969, p. 38. Also see Theodore C. Sorensen, "Why We Should Trade with the Soviet Union," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 3, April 1968, pp. 575-583.

³⁴ Statement of April 30, 1969, before the Senate International Finance Subcommittee, *Export Expansion and Regulation Hearings*, pp. 174-175.

vakia can be viewed as reversing the political and economic trends which have been developing in Eastern Europe.

Indeed, the fact that the Soviet Union was forced to invade Czechoslovakia, and brutally repress new freedoms, is proof to me that we have been correct in our assessment in the past.

An important difference, however, developed between these sentiments and the approach of the Republican Administration of Richard Nixon. The proponents of expanded trade, mainly in the Congress and the previous Administration, believed that trade should be played as the opening card, which would eventually lead to political improvements. The Nixon approach was the reverse: to keep expansion of economic relations as a reward to be offered later and as a direct result of prior political progress. Ironically, this turned out to be a crucial difference. In practice, the Nixon Strategy could not be carried out. The "reward" of expanded economic relations negotiated in late 1972 could not be delivered and collapsed in 1974-75. Indeed, the ultimate irony was that the liberal proponents of expanding Soviet trade in the 1960s turned against it and supported the linkage to Jewish emigration.

2. *Inside The Kremlin.* A second theory was that moderate U.S. behavior, including offers to expand trade, would have a similar moderating effect in the USSR, because it would strengthen sympathetic forces in the Kremlin. The persistent notion of factionalism was summed up by Marshall Shulman in terms of two opposing tendencies:³⁵

Relations with United States, perhaps more than any other aspect of Soviet foreign policy, reflect the interplay of opposing tendencies. From the point of view of those who see the strengthening and modernization of the Soviet economy as the primary requirement for Soviet power in the future, the present need is to reduce the drain on resources from military expenditures. This pragmatic judgment is expressed in statements of interest in strategic arms talks with United States and in a policy of reduced tension.

On the other hand, from the point of view of the orthodox wing of the Party bureaucracy, any slackening of opposition to the United States presents serious operational difficulties. Times of reduced tension and increased contacts with the West invariably complicate matters for the Party orthodoxy by encouraging non-conformist thought among youth, not only at home but also in Eastern Europe. . . .

³⁵ Marshall Shulman, *The Future of Soviet-American Cooperation*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper No. 66, March 1970.

What all this suggests is that any effort to project the future state of Soviet-American relations must take account of the uncertainty as to which tendency is likely to prevail in the Soviet Union, for each is accompanied by different perceptions of the United States and of Soviet interests.

The study of factionalism in the Kremlin, of course, dates back to well before the Second World War. In the post-war period, however, it began to be used less as a valid framework for analysis of Soviet politics and more as an argument for adopting policies to affect the outcome, by encouraging the more moderate faction. Two particular myths arose, persisted, and contributed to a vague and somewhat misleading perception of Soviet politics: First, that the Soviet leaders behaved unacceptably because they were badly informed; and, second, that there were always some more conciliatory leaders, or faction, waiting for recognition or promotion.

Kennan outlined this general tendency in his original analysis in which he argued that malign factions had a certain measure of control "over the information and advice that reach Stalin":³⁶

There are undoubtedly thoughtful people in the higher councils of the Soviet government. . . . But they still represent the weaker voice in the council of state.

Similar sentiments can be found in the wartime musings of Ambassador Harriman and Harry Hopkins and in various Kremlinological analyses of subsequent years. The strong tendency to treat Kremlin politics sentimentally was never more in evidence than in 1971 when Khrushchev died. The American press was almost nostalgic in its eulogies, passing lightly over his aggressive campaigns against Berlin and Cuba:³⁷

And yet Comrade Khrushchev, at least in Western eyes, and despite his earthy peasant ways and deliberate crudities with which he delighted to confound super-polite diplomats, probably did more for the welfare of his people than any of the heroes enshrined in the Kremlin wall.

And the *New York Times*:³⁸

(T)he petty vengefulness of the present Kremlin rulers, many of whom were originally his proteges, cannot obscure the fact that Khrushchev was a giant in Soviet and world history. A

³⁶ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1967, p. 545.

³⁷ *Christian Science Monitor*, September 15, 1971.

³⁸ *New York Times*, September 12, 1971.

complex and colorful figure, he must rank with Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin in any honest account of Soviet history. Indeed, on many accounts, he deserves recognition as a more positive and attractive leader than any of the other three. This peasant boy who became the Czar of Communist Russia left a lasting impression on his nation and the world.

In both his accomplishments and his failures, Nikita Khrushchev was a giant. In different times and different areas, he was both this nation's friend and its enemy.

The post-Khrushchev period has also been analyzed extensively in terms of factionalism. Almost every major turn—the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the development of détente in 1972, or most recently the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979—has been rationalized in terms of the ascendancy of hawks or doves, pro- or anti-Brezhnev, etc. There is, of course, a great deal of validity in the general analytical approach which assumes a continuing struggle for power in the Kremlin; it is a historical fact and inherent in the nature of the Soviet political system.³⁹ But this having been said, it is a marginal tool in divining intentions and formulating Western policy. The hope of appealing to some unknown faction deep in the bowels of the Kremlin is simply too uncertain an element on which to base policy decisions.

3. *China.* In the 1960s one final factor was added to the evolution of a new equation of Western analysis of Soviet policy; namely, the overriding importance of the growing split with China. While intensely appreciated in the West as a major problem, the Sino-Soviet split was shielded from more active American political probing and exploitation by the Vietnam war. Indeed, the support for Hanoi by both the Soviets and Chinese tended to blur the increasing sharpness of their differences. There was a tendency in Washington to see the split as ideological, but with limited political consequences. Even Henry Kissinger, who became the architect of the opening to China, began to appreciate the political possibilities of a U.S.-China rapprochement, in part because the Soviets were so heavy-handed in probing his reactions to the Sino-Soviet split, e.g., Dobrynin related to Kissinger a "gory account" of the clashes on the Ussuri River in 1969.⁴⁰ And, indeed, the North Vietnamese seemed to betray the growing importance of the Sino-Soviet split by private warnings to the new Nixon administration against attempting to draw any conclusions about the Ussuri River incidents.

It is an interesting commentary and sidelight on the American

³⁹ An excellent anatomy of Kremlin politics is Jiri Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1979.

⁴⁰ Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1979, p. 172.

policy process that the Sino-Soviet split, which had been under intense analysis and scrutiny in the bureaucracy, was taken less seriously by higher levels in the U.S. government. One White House staff aide under both Johnson and Nixon provides the following description:⁴¹

The most important international political event of the 1960s, the embittered schism between Russia and China, happened largely beyond the grasp of [the] foreign policy elite. For most of the decade the split was a cliché among many observers.

In any case, the Nixon Administration initiated a policy review to explore the consequences of the growing conflict for American policy. Morris, who participated in it, states:⁴²

The new [Nixon] regime was in many respects at its best in the early foreign policy reviews of 1969, a process in which it began to expose and dismantle some of the hoary myths of national security. Most important was the encouragement of a new official perspective on the Soviet Union and China.

The idea that the Soviet preoccupation with China could become a decisive influence on Moscow's policy gradually began to take hold and produce certain policy consequences. Kissinger relates in his memoirs that he sent the new President the following analysis in June 1969, drawing on the fact that Soviet ambassadors were circulating an expose of Chinese policy:⁴³

I believe this is solid evidence of the growing obsession of the Soviet leaders with their China problem . . . at least it suggests that the Soviets may become more flexible in dealing with East-West issues Thus Soviet concern may have finally reached the point that it can be turned to our advantage, in that they are in fact attempting to ensure our neutrality in their Chinese containment policy, if not our active cooperation.

According to Kissinger, President Nixon enthusiastically made marginal comments that this was "our goal."

In short, the rift between Peking and Moscow, which had been the subject of endless academic and scholarly discussions, had by mid-1969 become an increasingly important operational element in American policy. In this sense it was an issue ideally suited for a new administra-

⁴¹ Roger Morris, *Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1977, p. 24.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴³ Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1979, p. 179.

tion that emphasized a balance of power which, of course, required several autonomous and influential actors.

* * * * *

To sum up: During the 1960s a much more complex analysis of Soviet behavior was developed. The United States continued to harbor a bedrock fear and suspicion that the USSR was bent on expansion and subversion. But the Cuban missile crisis and the fall of Khrushchev introduced some new and important variables: a revived interest in the possibility of internal change and reform, which would be encouraged by an extensive economic relationship with the outside world; a belief in the possibility of change through a transformation of the character of the leadership; a stronger possibility of change growing out of Soviet recognition of mutual interests, especially in strategic stability; and, finally, a belief that change might be produced by the pressures of pluralism in the Communist world, including the impact of a rapprochement between the United States and China.

Among all of these added factors the most important may well have been the emergence of a strategic balance between the United States and the USSR. By the end of the 1960s a rough equality of sorts seemed to have been achieved. It was widely believed that this created an optimal moment for a settlement with the Soviet Union. If the United States were to concede a durable basis for strategic equality, and if the USSR would be willing to resist the temptation to secure specific advantages in weapons systems, then a negotiated stability could be created. This had been the general theory for some years, and the overwhelming argument for the SALT talks. It was perhaps fitting that the era that is now called *détente* is supposed to have begun in the winter of 1969 with the start of the SALT talks, and ended almost exactly a decade later, with the formal suspension of ratification of the SALT II treaty.

II. THE PERIOD OF DETENTE

One should date the advent of "détente" from the American University speech of President Kennedy in 1963. As already noted, the basic idea after the Cuban crisis was that there could be gains in stability through the consolidation of overlapping interests, especially in economics and in arms control.¹ This view survived the change from Kennedy to Johnson. Indeed, President Johnson, with the added advantage of the completion of the limited test ban treaty, began to enunciate a program that seemed to be an amalgam of previous policies, containment, liberation, and détente. His most famous policy statement concerned the concept of drawing together by "building bridges" to Eastern Europe—"bridges of increased trade, of ideas, of visitors, and of humanitarian aid." Among Johnson's goals, as stated on May 23, 1964, was an effort to give freer play to the powerful forces of legitimate national pride and to demonstrate that identity of interest and the prospects for progress for Eastern Europe lie in a wide relationship with the West. This was an echo of the Kennan prediction of internal evolution, but without the containment component.

This was the period in which both Bonn and Washington were experimenting with the notion that the USSR might be outflanked by a separate and distinct approach to Eastern Europe; Bonn in particular was pursuing the policy of "little steps" to overcome the division of Germany. Similarly, the United States believed that the USSR would have to follow the East European example, "lest it lose them altogether." And the United States, in shaping a new "structure," would convince the Soviet Union of the futility of its strategy of conflict in international politics.² The Johnson policy was nevertheless a lineal descendent of the Kennedy period: to seek a grand European settlement ("one of the great unfinished tasks of our generation");³

We must improve the East-West environment in order to achieve the unification of Germany in the context of a larger, peaceful and prosperous Europe. Our task is to achieve a recon-

¹ President Kennedy saw parallels between himself and Khrushchev, in that both wanted to prevent nuclear war but were under pressure from "hard-liners." Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1978, p. 596.

² Z. Brzezinski, "Peace and Power: Looking Toward the 1970s," *Encounter*, Vol. 31, No. 5, November 1968, pp. 3-13.

³ Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks in New York, October 7, 1966," *Public Papers of the President of the United States, 1966*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1967, pp. 1126-1128.

ciliation with the East—a shift from the narrow concept of coexistence to the broader vision of peaceful engagement. . . .

The Johnson rhetoric was reminiscent of earlier periods in which the problem was defined as a lack of contact (and knowledge) and, therefore, in the American view, a lack of "understanding." Thus, President Johnson, in his State of the Union message of January 4, 1965, called for "peaceful understandings with the Soviet Union I hope the new Soviet leaders can visit America so they can learn about our country at first hand."⁴

The Johnson approach of "peaceful engagement," including an emphasis on trade to enlarge the area of "understanding," was part of a broad Western reassessment, concluded in December 1967, and known as the Harmel report, which sanctified "détente and defense" as the twin pillars of NATO policy. The United States gave this reappraisal a new impetus by signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty in July 1968, on the occasion of which Johnson called anew for SALT talks. At the NATO meeting on June 1968, the Alliance (minus France) launched the idea of talks for mutual force reductions in Central Europe. Thus, before the invasion of Czechoslovakia there was a definite resurgence of the belief that it was possible to reach a political understanding with the USSR; to this end Johnson was actively negotiating a summit meeting when the Czech invasion broke. And even after the invasion—partly for political reasons related to Vietnam—the Johnson Administration persisted for a time in trying to arrange a summit conference. President Johnson described the invasion as only a "setback," and said "we hope—and we shall strive—to make this setback a very temporary one." As he explained it, despite the increase in tensions and the new military and political risks surrounding the invasion:⁵

The Soviet Union tonight can still return to the only road that really can lead to peace and security for all. That is the road of reducing tensions, of enlarging the area of understanding and agreement. It can still change—if not undo—what it has done in Czechoslovakia. It can still act there and can act elsewhere with the prudence and confidence which characterize the conduct any great nation. Because it is never too late to choose the path of reason.

Every man of sanity will hope that the Soviets will act now

⁴ Lyndon B. Johnson, *Public Papers of the President of the United States, 1965*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1966, p. 3.

⁵ Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address to the B'nai B'rith Meeting in Washington, D.C., September 10, 1968," in *Lyndon B. Johnson, Public Papers of the President of the United States, 1968-1969 (II)*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1970, p. 946.

before some new turn of events throws the world back to the grim confrontation of Mr. Stalin's time.

The Johnson approach ended in failure. Indeed, it was poorly conceived to the degree that there was an expectation that the USSR, confronted by the potential loosening of its satellites, would acquiesce in return for increased trade and credits and a better "understanding." What Johnson did succeed in achieving, however, was important: the elevation of arms control negotiations from the depths of absurdity reached in the 1950s (Complete and General Disarmament) to a serious and active issue between Moscow and Washington; the limited test ban agreement and the Non-Proliferation Treaty made SALT plausible. And the advent of an American ballistic missile defense system, finally announced by Secretary McNamara in late 1967, made the question of negotiations on strategic weapons increasingly urgent. But the Czech invasion served as a stark reminder that any Soviet-American relationship would have to be broadly based and that tension in Europe or elsewhere could and would infect other aspects of the relationship. Whereas in 1966-67 Brezhnev rebuffed Johnson's East-West diplomacy, citing the incompatibility of Vietnam, he had tolerated the Glassboro summit and was negotiating for a new summit in 1968. Moreover, the post-Czech invasion period demonstrated that the interest in détente was growing, particularly in Germany and also in the Western Alliance as a whole. This interest was becoming more immune to the Kremlin's forays. By the spring of 1969, Czechoslovakia was receding as a political obstacle (a fact that was to play a major role a decade later in shaping the Carter Administration's sharp reaction to Afghanistan).

Thus, the new American administration in January 1969 was confronted by a complicated set of circumstances. On the one hand, tensions in Eastern Europe, growing Soviet military power, the proclamation of a new Brezhnev doctrine, and even the rising tensions on the Sino-Soviet border—all suggested a return to containment. On the other hand, adding a cold war confrontation with Moscow to the Vietnam War was inconceivable as a deliberate American policy. Moreover, there was already a European security negotiating agenda that was strongly supported in NATO. And there was the overriding belief that in order to settle Vietnam the USSR would have to be involved. Indeed, Vietnam rather than Berlin, or SALT, or trade was probably the determining factor in the *initial* Nixon approach to the USSR. Since both Nixon and Kissinger have written at length of their views toward the USSR in this period, only a few observations are in order.

Kissinger saw containment as an era of lost opportunities, when the West squandered its nuclear monopoly by deferring negotiations until a "position of strength" had been achieved, thus postponing a post-war

settlement. Moreover, containment gave American policy an "excessively military conception" of the balance of power; the nature of military technology, particularly the advent of nuclear weapons, made reliance on military factors to meet every challenge to the balance increasingly less realistic; managing the new military balance required not only a strategic equilibrium but also regional balances. Kissinger also argued that containment was an inadequate means to deal with the ideological conflict, which transformed inter-state conflicts into a contest between philosophies and which threatened the balance through domestic upheavals.

In addition, Kissinger was skeptical of the proposition that through containment Soviet behavior would be affected because of forced changes in Soviet society. He questioned whether American policy could be geared to various assumptions regarding the transformation of Soviet society; this would escape the policy dilemma by relying on history for vindication and, in the process, control over many factors essential to American survival would be given up. Rather than conducting foreign policy, America risked becoming bogged down in an endless sociological debate over the nature of change in Soviet society.

It is ironic that Nixon and Kissinger became identified with the policy of détente. Initially, at least, neither saw a prospect for more than a narrow, limited accommodation with the Soviet Union. Rather than a broad relaxation of tensions, they offered Moscow a number of specific issues (e.g., Berlin) for negotiation within a general framework, in a process that came to be designated as linkage. Whether the results would yield a major Soviet change was always considered highly problematical and to some extent even irrelevant. Kissinger saw Soviet-American relations within the framework of (1) a general equilibrium which made it impossible for one power to impose its will, and (2) a "particular equilibrium" which described the historical relationship between the two powers. Under the first category there would be SALT, a useful instrument in reinforcing a general deterrent against nuclear war, and the overture to China, which in part would compensate for growing Soviet power. Under the second category of a "particular equilibrium" would come the settlement of the more traditional issues such as Berlin, Germany, European security, trade, and bilateral relationships.

Moreover, Kissinger understood that both superpowers were entering a period in which the nature of power was being redefined and, therefore, also the nature of superpower relations. The nuclear age had destroyed the traditional measure of power and altered the requirements for maintaining the balance of power: an increase of purely military strength did not confer an equal element of security in an era of nuclear vulnerability. Therefore, it appeared possible to "discipline

power so that it bears a rational relationship to the objective likely to be in dispute." Thus was born the essence of the bilateral negotiations that Kissinger conducted, which generally fell under the heading of restraining Soviet expansionism through an agreed set of rules or a "code of conduct," as it was called by the press (and by Kissinger's successors). Kissinger frequently emphasized the limited utility of a set of written principles; but given Soviet fascination with agreed documents, and the potentialities of some guidelines in attempting to define the limits of Soviet behavior, the 1972 Joint Principles were considered worth the risk of disillusionment if and when they were violated.⁶

Finally, Kissinger understood that relations with the Soviet Union were bound to be ambiguous, if only because the Soviets were persistent in confronting their opponents with ambiguity. For Kissinger this Soviet tendency was to be countered by a policy of "precaution"; that is, of sensing or foreseeing Soviet challenges and meeting them early. This was difficult in a democracy where the statesman had to prove his assumptions to a skeptical public and the Congress. Consistent with the policy of precaution was the Kissinger attitude toward negotiation; rejecting the more traditional approach of building up a "position of strength," Kissinger saw negotiations decoupled from the debate over Soviet intentions. Negotiations need not await a change of heart in the Kremlin but could proceed on their merits provided, however, that a general framework (or strategy) was devised and understood by all the participants.⁷

It is not necessary to settle the question of the real intentions of the Communist leaders in the abstract. For we should be prepared to negotiate no matter what Communist purposes. . . . Negotiations with the Soviet Union must be justified by our purposes, not theirs. If the Soviet Union really wants a settlement, negotiations will reveal this. If Soviet overtures to end the Cold War are a tactical maneuver, a purposeful diplomacy should be able to make Soviet bad faith evident.

Thus, Kissinger foresaw that there could be a series of *partial* settlements, irrespective of any Soviet grand design. After taking office he argued for the tactic of the interrelationship of issues, or linkage, for two reasons: first, to prevent the Soviet Union from establishing its own agenda and concentrating on those agreements it wanted; and, second,

⁶ These principles have had a checkered career; the Carter and Reagan Administrations have cited them as still valid; Secretary of State Alexander Haig was reported to be exploring a new elaboration (*Washington Post*, February 13, 1981).

⁷ Henry A. Kissinger, *The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1961, p. 210.

to insure that one or two isolated issues would not be resolved in an atmosphere of underlying hostility, but would be embedded in a *general* improvement in relations. Kissinger saw the dangers, however, that successful negotiations could be represented as a "permanent conversion to a peaceful course" and that there would be a temptation to "gear everything to personal diplomacy." His answer was to insist on a program of concrete negotiations, including the issues that were the real source of tension and hence were genuinely difficult:⁸

(T)hey are usually avoided during summit diplomacy in favor of showy but essentially peripheral gestures. The vaguer the East-West discourse, the greater will be the confusion in the West.

In sum, the initial approach of the Nixon-Kissinger period was to deemphasize the ideological element, to downgrade the likelihood of profound changes in Soviet society, to set aside the debate on the nature of Soviet intentions, and to exploit the opportunities to reach specific, though limited accommodations. To a great extent this was the policy actually followed. Until the spring of 1971 only limited progress was achieved. Indeed, "détente" in this period was given its initial impetus not by Washington but by Bonn, where the new coalition government under Willy Brandt broke with the Adenauer limitations and played out a new Eastern policy that created the foundations of major European settlement by the summer of 1970. Yet, at the very moment when West Germany seemed to be writing an end to the post-war period, Washington was still sparring with Moscow over Cuba and the Middle East. Indeed, the annual report on foreign policy issued by President Nixon in early 1971 stressed the ambivalent nature of Soviet-American relations, underscoring major areas of differences; for example, it stated:⁹

We view the world and approach international affairs differently. . . . As the two most powerful nations in the world we conduct global policies that bring our interests into contention across a broad range of issues. . . . We often approach negotiations with differing premises. . . . We are engaged in a strategic and military competition. . . .

The report concluded that an assessment of U.S.-Soviet relations "has to be mixed."

⁸ Henry A. Kissinger, *The Troubled Partnership: A Reappraisal of the Atlantic Alliance*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1965, pp. 203-205.

⁹ Richard M. Nixon, *Public Papers of the President of the United States, 1971*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1972, pp. 304-305.

The two events that changed this assessment were (1) the tactical breakthrough in the SALT deadlock over whether to conclude a separate ABM treaty in May 1971 and (2) more fundamentally, the U.S. opening to China. The impact of China on the Soviet-U.S. dialogue has been outlined by Kissinger in his memoirs in some detail. Suffice to say that it unloosened a number of other issues—both Berlin and SALT—and led directly to the summit of May 1972 in Moscow. It contributed, perhaps decisively, to Soviet willingness to proceed with that summit despite the mining and bombing of Haiphong. Thus, Soviet-American relations were altered in this period not by a better “understanding,” or more contacts, but by a change in the raw balance of power. It is important to note that Soviet motives in pursuing détente, while tactically related to its objectives in Central Europe and in strategic arms limitation, also reflected their concern about the coalescing of two fronts. The Soviets gradually came to make a U.S. willingness to drop the China option and take up a semi-alliance with Moscow a critical test of détente. This was rejected and it was this rejection in the Nixon 1974 summit and at the Vladivostok meeting that became one of the decisive factors in the waning of détente. Many other factors contributed, of course, but this was a central one.¹⁰

For the United States, détente seemed to have achieved one of its purposes when the war in Vietnam was officially terminated by the Paris agreements. It is highly unlikely that this point could have been reached without the prior political American rapprochement with both China and the Soviet Union. The passing of direct American involvement in Indochina permitted a focus on the fundamental problems for Soviet-American relations. Could a more basic U.S.-Soviet settlement be developed in the post-Vietnam era? Two contradictory aspects began to emerge. Washington would be free of some divisions and obsessions of Vietnam. But on the other hand, an accommodation with Moscow, which had been justified by Vietnam requirements, would now come under more stringent scrutiny. And détente would have to encompass some new and difficult elements: A European military settlement, to complement the German treaties, for example, would have to include some reduction in Soviet military predominance in Central Europe. A long-term stabilization of the strategic nuclear balance would involve extensive concessions by both sides. And building a bilateral relationship would have to include a new policy on trade and credits. These became the general American objectives, and they required an increasing Soviet acceptance of the status quo.

¹⁰ It is frequently charged that détente relied greatly on a “web” of interlocking bilateral agreements that would tie down the Soviet “Gulliver.” This is nonsense; no one involved in this period believed that the bilateral agreements (except SALT and trade) were more than ornaments.

The high point of détente was the summit meeting in June 1973 in Washington and San Clemente. It was during this visit that the agreement on reducing the dangers of nuclear war was signed, an agreement first proposed by Moscow in 1972 and probably seen as an important milestone on the road to a U.S.-Soviet condominium. While its original blatant overtones of joint hegemony had been severely muted in the drafting during 1972-73, the actual agreement still may have raised a general expectation in Moscow that joint actions were not ruled out. Indeed, it was the springboard for Soviet suggestions that the two superpowers might act together against China. This had already been broadly suggested during the first SALT negotiations and more pointedly during the Kissinger trip to Moscow in the spring of 1973. While direct propositions were carefully avoided, the tenor of the Soviet approaches was that the United States and the USSR had a common interest in restraining the slumbering Chinese dragon.

Brezhnev, according to Nixon, feared a U.S.-Chinese military agreement; and he was dissatisfied with the final agreement (on preventing nuclear war) because it fell short of precluding a U.S.-Chinese rapprochement. During the 1973 summit Brezhnev pointedly pursued the question of triangular relations, speculating openly about how long it would be before the Chinese became a nuclear threat. Brezhnev's overtures to Nixon came in the form of a plea against a U.S.-Chinese military agreement:¹¹

At the end of the meeting Brezhnev urged as diplomatically as his obviously strong feelings allowed that we not enter into any military agreement with China. He said that he had refrained from asking the question in 1972, but now he was worried about the future. He asserted that the Soviets had no intention of attacking China. But if China had a military agreement with the United States, he said, that would "confuse the issue."

Brezhnev's denial of any intention of attacking China only served as a reminder of this option. And Brezhnev clearly was angling to form at least a tacit alliance against Peking. Moreover, this was at a time before the Yom Kippur War, when the Soviets, having suffered a major setback in Egypt, were urging a common policy with the United States on the Middle East. Indeed, Brezhnev staged a late night session in San Clemente haranguing Nixon about the dangers of the situation in the Middle East and the importance of joint action (an "understanding" on principles). In Brezhnev's mind at least this performance may have

¹¹ Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 1978, p. 883.

absolved him of any blame in not warning of the war in October 1973. Critics of détente tend to ignore this particular discussion in accusing the Soviets of violating the joint principles of May 1972.

That war, in any case, dealt Soviet-American relations a major blow. Critics saw Soviet failure to warn the United States as treacherous, violating the agreements of May 1972 and June 1973. But for the Soviets to betray a friendly power, Egypt, to the friend of Israel would indeed have been the miracle of détente. It is extremely difficult to believe that the United States would not have warned Israel had Washington been tipped off by Moscow. But, it is worth noting that what the Soviets saw in this entire affair, including even the nuclear alert of October 22, was not the end of détente but the proof of its validity. Thus Brezhnev in a speech in India, explained that¹²

If there had not been this factor of détente developed during the last two to three years, the situation would look entirely different. If the current conflict would explode in an environment of general international tensions and the sharpening of relations, let's say, between the United States and the Soviet Union, the confrontation in the Middle East could become far more dangerous and be on a scale threatening the general peace.

And indeed, there continued to be in Soviet policy a residual interest in a joint policy. This had been pressed hard during the Middle East war, and the Soviets saw the cease-fire sponsored by the United States and the USSR as marking their reentry into the mainstream of Middle East politics. The disengagement negotiations subsequently pursued by Secretary Kissinger were therefore a sharp setback for Moscow. Not only was the USSR being excluded from the flow of Middle East diplomacy, but the United States was developing a dominant position.

And against this setback in the probing and maneuvering about China, the United States was also proving an elusive partner. In the final summit with Nixon in July 1974, Brezhnev made one last effort to find some common ground for a policy against China. Nixon relates in his memoirs:¹³

Diary

We had a very frank and forthcoming discussion on the subjects he had apparently wanted to talk to me alone about He first brought up his new idea of a U.S.-Soviet treaty which others

¹² Quoted in Dimitri Simes, "The Death of Détente," *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Summer 1980, p. 3.

¹³ Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 1978, p. 1030.

could join where each country would come to the defense of the other if either country or one of its allies were attacked. This of course smacks of condominium in the most blatant sense.

Such a "treaty" as described by Nixon could of course only have been of interest for Moscow if directed against China. Even though Nixon reports that Brezhnev affected a disinterest in China, Gromyko warned that the Chinese were a great threat to peace and would sacrifice anything, their own cities and people, to accomplish their goals. One way to read this particular passage is that the Soviets feared the Chinese were gradually becoming immune to Soviet nuclear blackmail (i.e., "sacrifice their cities"), and that a defensive treaty with the United States might have some deterrent value. Brezhnev was philosophical, merely saying that Mao was a God and after he died there would be a new God (an interesting sidelight on how the Soviets see politics in general, not only in China).

Despite the probable decisiveness of the China factor, many observers in the summer of 1974 saw the weakness of détente in the faltering SALT negotiations. The *Washington Post* editorialized (on July 5), "Barring a measure of mutual restraint in the next few years in the absence of a formal agreement, this (meeting) might just be—at least in respect to the arms race—an epitaph for détente." Similarly, the *New York Times* commented (on July 5) that the failure of the summit to reach a new arms agreement "testifies to the continuing fragility of détente." Détente, however, was also a casualty of Watergate. Nixon was in the unenviable political position of being unable either to deliver the benefits of a constructive relationship or to impose the penalties for adventures. The result was a massive frustration in Moscow. And this frustration was compounded because the China dimension remained uppermost in Moscow's mind, and the declining authority of the American President to reach any agreement became a factor in the Kremlin's calculus.

The failure in Moscow provoked an effort to stimulate a national debate on the broad question of détente, a debate which unfortunately coincided with the climax of Watergate. The Congressional hearings of the summer of 1974 are still a useful compendium of views, but as a policy exercise they failed. Their timing was incredibly bad for any real debate. A major statement of the premises of détente, however, was contained in Kissinger's statement of September 19.¹⁴ The debate also foreshadowed some of the policies that were to succeed Kissinger.

¹⁴ Henry A. Kissinger, "Détente with the Soviet Union, The Reality of Competition and the Imperative of Cooperation," September 19, 1974, *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. LXXI, No. 1842, October 14, 1974, pp. 505-522.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, for example, explained that the problem was to pursue a more "comprehensive détente" rather than an artificially compartmentalized détente. Brzezinski listed five areas in which Soviet behavior was *not* consistent with a comprehensive détente: (1) ideological hostility; (2) strategic secrecy; (3) global indifference; (4) human rights; and (5) harassment of foreigners. Progress in remedying these areas, Brzezinski argued, would justify "more extensive American commitments and credits; indeed some commitments might be made to encourage such progress . . ."¹⁵

A more telling epitaph was provided by Senator Fulbright, who conducted the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings. He concluded that détente was dying not of inconsistency but of indifference:¹⁶

I find there seems to be an indifference to the idea of détente partly because of a feeling that it is futile and I do not know how you overcome that . . . When the Secretary (Kissinger) advanced it there was widespread interest in it and now as you can see from the committee this morning, there is relatively little . . .

One effect of this debate, however, was to highlight the growing reservations about trade as an element of U.S.-Soviet relations. The linkage of trade concessions to freer emigration from the Soviet Union was gaining strong adherents. The *New York Times*, for example, reversed its earlier (1969) position. Trade was no longer the key to relations, but a technological trap.¹⁷

The danger of détente as it has been pursued therefore is that the United States may get an eloquently expressed design for interrelationships while the Russians get a new generation of computers. Compounding this imbalance, principles of behavior—however solemnly agreed—can be readily revoked; technological knowledge once disclosed can never be withdrawn.

And an astute observer, the late Hans Morgenthau, caught the spirit of growing skepticism when he wrote that Soviet policies deserved to be examined on their merits:¹⁸

Yet their justification or rejection in the name of détente inhib-

¹⁵ Z. Brzezinski, "Détente? Of What Kind?" *Washington Post*, August 4, 1974.

¹⁶ *Détente, Hearings Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, August-October 1974*, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1975.

¹⁷ *New York Times*, September 26, 1974.

¹⁸ *Wall Street Journal*, July 18, 1974.

its such examination: The invocation of détente as a kind of disembodied spirit permeating and thereby transforming the overall relations of formerly hostile nations becomes a substitute for the detached examination of the objective factors of interests and power.

If Watergate inflicted a severe wound to the development of the process of détente, and if the failure of Brezhnev's China initiative robbed it of some meaning for Moscow, the final, fatal blow to détente was delivered by the desertion of the same liberal American constituents who had supported trade, SALT, and the relaxation of tensions. They gradually withdrew their mandate, in part because of disenchantment with the persistent Soviet repression against Jews and intellectuals, in part because of disenchantment with the limited scope and slow pace of SALT, but also in some measure because of their mounting fury against the Nixon Administration. The decline and disappearance of Nixon still left his principal foreign policy achievements unaffected in the main: the opening to China and relaxation with the Soviet Union. The latter was the more vulnerable target, and both liberals and conservatives could temporarily join forces against it: the conservatives against SALT and the liberals against trade.¹⁹

The Ford-Brezhnev meeting in Vladivostok should be seen in light of these trends. At the technical level, the SALT negotiations were proving increasingly complicated because of conflicting pressures. There were strong political pressures in the United States which took the form of insistence on achieving a strict strategic "equality." The realities of strategic force developments posed new problems which were not susceptible to easy technical resolutions, e.g., the potential threat of accurate Soviet MIRVs against U.S. ICBM silos. In this light the U.S. dilemma was whether to seek a bargain based on offsetting and compensatory but unequal limits or strive for a nominal "equality." At the critical moment President Ford opted for equality in order to disarm the critics at home, thus passing up a more complicated asymmetrical bargain.²⁰

Nevertheless, there was a critical American public and Congressional reaction to the Vladivostok agreement. The prevalence of criticism reflected the fact that most of the substance was gradually being drained out of Soviet-American relations. There was a surprisingly sharp attack on the high numbers involved despite the strict numerical equality (a limit of 2400 strategic vehicles and 1320 MIRVed missiles

¹⁹ It is also likely that many liberals and especially converted "neo-conservatives" became strong opponents of détente as compensation for their earlier violent opposition to the Vietnam war.

²⁰ Gerald Ford, *A Time to Heal*, Harper and Row, New York, 1979, p. 213.

for each side). There followed within weeks the passage of the Jackson and Stevenson amendments to the Trade Act, effectively denying credits to the USSR by linking Soviet trade to free Jewish emigration. For the first time, a sociological-political change within the USSR became an official object of U.S. foreign policy, a complete turnover of the containment/evolution theory.

This trade linkage was officially rejected by the Soviets in January 1975. Except for the continuing hopes that SALT would be quickly concluded and a further agreement started, Soviet-American relations held increasingly little promise. Only the European security projects—Helsinki meetings and the Vienna negotiations over mutual and balanced force reductions remained unaffected. Yet the Helsinki negotiations, the so-called Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, had been a second-level issue, promised to the Soviets largely as an inducement to settle the Berlin question in 1971. By 1975, however, Western stalling tactics had run their course, and the European leaders in particular were eager to use the CSCE as their entree to the détente process. The United States remained hesitant and skeptical of this conference, and was privately concerned with its illusory effect in Western Europe, this scepticism nevertheless did not exclude the Ford Administration from major domestic criticism for attending the Helsinki summit. The backlash against both Vladivostok and Helsinki called into question the very notion of a more conciliatory relationship with the Soviet Union. The assault implied in the linkage of Jewish emigration and trade/credits was reinforced by the outcries against the abuse of human rights in the USSR, and the issue was dramatically emphasized by the public attacks on American policy by Alexander Solzhenitsyn shortly before the Helsinki meeting. The Ford Administration found itself having to defend the “morality” of détente, and in the process found itself more and more on the defensive, especially since the SALT negotiations were becoming increasingly stalemated.

Kissinger in his major statement on détente had said:²¹ “Thus we must be clear at the outset on what the term ‘détente’ entails. It is the search for a more *constructive relationship* with the Soviet Union reflecting the realities I have outlined.” Almost a year later, on July 15, 1975, his emphasis was shifting;²² he said that, “We consider détente a means to regulate a *competitive relationship* . . .” And, further, as the internal dialogue deteriorated, some of the more familiar balance of power considerations began to reappear: Kissinger

²¹ Henry A. Kissinger, “Détente with the Soviet Union,” address given September 19, 1974, *Department of State Bulletin*, October 14, 1974.

²² Henry A. Kissinger, “The Moral Foundations of Foreign Policy,” address given July 15, 1975, *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. LXXIII, No. 1884, August 4, 1975, p. 166.

stated in the fall of 1975 that under conditions of nuclear parity, "we have to conduct a policy in which we try to limit or *contain* the power of other countries through creating balances, backed by our military strength around the world." In short, as the inability to move the relationship forward became more and more evident, the theme of containment began to reappear.

One reason was the burgeoning challenge of Angola, and another factor was the concern over the revolution in Portugal, where it appeared that the local communists might actually gain dominant positions. The two issues were increasingly linked: the leftward trends in Lisbon fed the conflict in Luanda; Portuguese authorities were conspiring with indigenous communists in Angola to mount a severe challenge to the agreed settlement, the Alvor Accords of January 1975. It was the civil war in Angola, rather than the Helsinki meeting, or the failure of SALT, or even the human rights issues, that made it impossible to salvage détente. One overall aim in 1972 had been to establish a more stable relationship in which the USSR would acquire a vested interest and therefore an incentive to modify or moderate its "expansionist behavior." By late 1975, the USSR had fewer and fewer reasons to adhere to a policy of moderation. Even though the Helsinki conference had confirmed the political and territorial status quo in Europe, this historic gain was qualified by a general Western challenge that Moscow had to prove itself and its commitment to the goals of the conference. It is probably one of the great ironies of the post-war period that at the very moment when the European settlement was finally reached, it was no longer decisive. The contest for Europe was important, indeed vital; but the arena for competition was shifting once again to the third world—to Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

For the Soviets the time had arrived to review and reassess the course of relations, especially in light of the increasingly critical climate toward the Soviet Union in the United States, as manifested in abolition of "détente" from the American political vocabulary, and the conservative challenge to President Ford within his own party, a bizarre challenge considering the lack of domestic and Congressional support given Ford during his effort to combat and confront the Soviets in Angola. A Senate refusal to continue funding a clandestine effort in Angola was voted in December 1975. Shortly thereafter, a statement of the new American attitude was contained in a Kissinger speech of February 3, 1976, in which the language of containment now reappeared with new emphasis. Thus, Kissinger stated that:²³

²³ Henry A. Kissinger, "The Permanent Challenge of Peace: U.S. Policy Toward the Soviet Union," address given in San Francisco, February 3, 1976, *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 1913, February 23, 1976, pp. 201-212.

The policies pursued by this Administration have been designed to *prevent Soviet expansion* but also to build a pattern of relations in which the Soviet Union will always confront penalties for aggression and also acquire growing incentives for restraint. It is our responsibility to *contain Soviet power* without global war, to avoid abdication as well as unnecessary confrontation (emphasis added)

The goals of American policies continued to be expressed in terms similar to statements in the earlier period, but the emphasis was more negative. The task of checking the USSR replaced the positive benefits of cooperation. Thus Kissinger continued

So let us understand the scope and limits of a realistic policy. We cannot prevent the growth of Soviet power, but we can prevent its use for unilateral advantage and political expansion. We cannot prevent a buildup of Soviet forces, but we have the capacity, together with our allies, to maintain an equilibrium. We cannot neglect this task and then blame the Soviet Union if the military balance shifts against us. We have the diplomatic, economic and military capacity to resist expansionism, but we cannot engage in a rhetoric of confrontation while depriving ourselves of the means to confront.

This statement of February 1976 was a largely retrospective rationale for the anti-Soviet effort in Angola, but it also contained an interesting forewarning of a debate that would reemerge four years later during the Afghanistan crisis. In addressing the problem of applying sanctions against the USSR by abrogating SALT or by denying grain sales, Kissinger stated that these arrangements were part of the long-term strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union: "History has proved time and again that expansion can be checked only when there is a local balance of forces, indirect means can succeed only if rapid local victories are foreclosed."²⁴

Thus, Kissinger, nearing the close of his tenure and almost thirty years after the original formulation of containment, found himself describing American policy in strikingly similar terms to the Kennan period. The containment of Soviet expansionism still appeared to be the prerequisite for any semblance of a normal, constructive relationship. The refusal of the Congress to perceive the challenge in Angola in this light is still something of a political mystery; leading conservatives voted to stop the program of support to the anti-communists. It was in any case the beginning of the period of growing conflict with the USSR.

²⁴ Ibid.

After January 1977 the Soviets and the new American administration of President Carter drew quite different conclusions. The Soviets reappraised their position and decided that the circumstances were ripe for a more forward policy, and a series of aggressive probes were then launched. The new American administration treated Angola as an aberration; it was the "mishandling" of the Angola conflict that created an opening for the Soviet Union, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski.²⁵ The new view was that the Third World was less a battleground for competition with Moscow but more an area where expression could be given to American moral values, i.e., through the encouragement of human rights. It was argued that the Soviet Union, given its faltering and flawed social and economic system, its aging leadership, its unattractive political and economic models, would soon find itself forced into isolation or compelled to join the new system of global interdependence, which in turn would begin to temper Soviet power.²⁶ One official version argued:²⁷

The power of both the United States and the Soviet Union to impose their will on each other or on weaker nations is more likely to be constrained by the international system than by their bilateral relationship.

Somewhat later George Kennan added his influential voice to the criticism of containment (on the anniversary of his original article), and others joined in the assault on the idea that the United States could or should contain the USSR. The real problem was America's "philosophical isolation," and the principal task was to prevent the intersection between East-West issues and North-South issues.²⁸

The general thesis of a new approach was expressed in the new President's speech at Notre Dame University in March 1977. Mr. Carter emphasized that in the new world facing the United States, the

²⁵ *Christian Science Monitor*, June 11, 1976.

²⁶ The similarity of the arguments of the mid-1960s and mid-1970s was more than a coincidence. Democratic administrations have tended to the conviction of an inevitable Soviet evolution and have been intent on discovering the key to unlocking the process.

²⁷ Seyom Brown, "A Cooling-off Period for U.S.-Soviet Relations," *Foreign Policy*, No. 28, Fall 1977, pp. 3-21.

²⁸ One observer recently summed up the process in the following words: "Thus during the first half of the 1970s an elaborate intellectual structure was built in defense of the idea that the containment of communism by the United States was neither possible nor necessary, nor even desirable. This idea above all others, was 'the lesson of Vietnam' and the overriding purpose of the aspiring establishment was to make it the guiding principle of American foreign policy as a whole." (Carl Gershman, "The Rise and Fall of the New Foreign Policy Establishment," *Commentary*, July 1980; also see Norman Podhoretz, "The Present Danger," in *Commentary*, March 1980, p. 33.)

threat, and containment, of the Soviet Union would no longer be as critical ("less intensive") to international stability.

What made this new approach particularly ironic was that it coincided with the beginning of a new thrust in Soviet policy, which will now be examined.

III. SOVIET STRATEGY IN TRANSITION

The Helsinki Conference on European security of 1975 marked the end of the era in which more traditional problems of Germany and European security had dominated East-West relations. These problems were settled at Helsinki with as much finality as is possible in international affairs. Another event occurred about this time that symbolized, along with Helsinki, the end of an important phase of Soviet foreign policy: Sadat's unilateral abrogation of the Egyptian-Soviet Friendship Treaty in 1976, marking the end of a twenty-year Soviet effort to establish and consolidate a permanent position of dominance in the Middle East. Ironically, the effort to achieve a European Security Conference and to penetrate the Middle East had begun about the same time—1954-55. Now both efforts were coming to an end—the one a relative recent success, the other a failure. Thus, for the Soviets the question was how to proceed not only in European policy, where a "military détente" was supposedly next on the agenda, but more broadly in the conduct of its global policy.

Having achieved the ratification of the political and territorial status quo, the Soviets after 1975 continued to press a European "détente," hoping to realize greater economic gains in East-West trade, to promote a loosening of Western political and military arrangements, and, probably, to encourage a gradual scaling down of the American presence and influence in Europe. More generally, the Soviets hoped to entice the West Europeans into the Soviet economic sphere to block any shift to Chinese markets. Brezhnev summed up his satisfaction with Europe in his address to the XXV Party Congress on February 24, 1976:¹

Largely due to the concerted efforts of Socialist states must be credited the world wide recognition of the sovereignty of the German Democratic Republic, its entry into the UN and the international confirmation of the inviolability of the Western frontiers of the GDR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Conditions have been created for a stable peace in Europe.

The temporary success in Europe was offset, however, by the recognition that a phase of Soviet policy in the Third World had run its

¹ "Brezhnev's Report to the Congress," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. 28, No. 8, February 24, 1976, p. 5.

course. In the 1950s and early 1960s the Soviet Union had broken out of a self-imposed Stalinist isolation and found a wide field of political opportunities in the post-war breakdown of the colonial system. It adopted a highly pragmatic policy embracing a heterogeneous collection of new states, some of which had communist sympathies, but most of which were simply radical or nationalist regimes, led by such figures as Sukarno, Nkrumah, Nehru, and Nasser. Ideological conformity was never a criterion or condition for Soviet assistance. Indeed, the Soviets were prepared at times to stand aside when local communists were imprisoned, harassed, or annihilated.

For a long time this policy paid significant political dividends in enhanced Soviet influence and prestige. But the general trend of developments refused to follow the precepts of Soviet theory: "national-democratic" regimes did not, in fact, gradually transform themselves into Soviet-style parties or governments. On the contrary, a reaction eventually set in: major figures who were sympathetic to Moscow began to fade or fall from power.

A new turbulence was particularly evident in the Middle East where the Soviet position in Egypt began to suffer, in part because of the Soviet Union's inability to deliver gains in the Arab struggle against Israel. The Yom Kippur War in 1973 then opened the door to an American diplomacy that was aimed at reducing and removing Soviet influence. Suddenly, in the one region where American power seemed to have been permanently excluded because of the Washington-Israeli axis, the United States was emerging as the key to the diplomatic process. The partial expulsion of the Soviets before the 1973 War and the subsequent denunciation of the friendship treaty were symptoms of the broader transformation of the Soviet position, which also incidentally included a serious setback with Mrs. Ghandi's (temporary) political collapse. And in this same general geographical area, the outlines of closer cooperation between Iran, Afghanistan, and even Pakistan began to take shape.

An astute Arab observer described the condition of Soviet policy in the following manner:²

By 1975 the great Soviet offensive, which had begun in 1955, was a spent force. Over a period of twenty years it had had its successes and failures; there had been moments when those who welcomed it had felt it almost triumphant and when those who opposed it were panic-stricken; but now there could be no two opinions—the offensive was in a state of total collapse. By the time Henry Kissinger completed his mission as almost sin-

² Mohammed Heikal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World*, Harper and Row, New York, 1979, p. 275.

gle-handed arbiter of the destinies of Middle Eastern countries, one chapter for those countries and their relations with the Soviet Union had closed and a new chapter had been opened.

These trends led Brezhnev to remark at the XXV Party Congress:³

Some regimes and political organizations that have proclaimed socialist aims and are carrying out progressive changes have come under strong pressure from home and foreign reaction. The recent rightist campaign against the government of Indira Ghandi, and the attempts to undermine the social and political gains of the Egyptian revolution, are examples of such developments.

By this time, late February 1976, Soviet policy had already begun to adjust to the altered circumstances.

At the Party Congress and in surrounding rhetoric, the Soviets began to counterattack American charges that Soviet conduct in Angola, supporting "the forces of progress," was somehow inconsistent with the détente relationship with the United States: "Détente does not in the slightest way abolish and cannot abolish or change the laws of class struggle," Brezhnev proclaimed. Whereas in 1971 Brezhnev had put forward a new "peace program," in 1976 he proclaimed the new "era of radical social change." The victories of the national-democratic movements opened up "new horizons," the revolutionary democratic movement was "assuming ever larger propositions," and all of this meant, "as a whole, the development of a worldwide revolutionary process."

In short, the Soviets analyzed the trends and had begun to adapt their policies to exploit two assets: their military prowess and local ideological allies—a new set of leaders who seemed intrigued with the Leninist philosophy of maintaining political power.

THE NEW BALANCE OF POWER

In the latter half of the 1970s, the world at large, and the United States in particular, had to take greater and greater account of the undeniable increases in Soviet military power. Revised official estimates published in the United States indicated that there had been a massive commitment of resources applied to the military account in the USSR. Growth rates in the military sector since 1945 were calculated

³ "Brezhnev's Report to the Congress," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. 28, No. 8, February 24, 1976, p. 7.

by the CIA at 4 to 5 percent annually, and the percent of the GNP devoted to the military was thought to be 11 to 13 percent, rising to 12 to 14 percent in the last few years.⁴ This finally confirmed what some analysts had long since concluded on the basis of observable trends in the supply of modern equipment as well as in actual levels of Soviet force deployments. After the fall of Khrushchev and smarting under the Cuban missile humiliation, the USSR had embarked on a broad campaign to build up its strategic power, to modernize its conventional forces in Europe, to create a virtually new force structure of combined arms opposite China, and to develop a blue water navy. This staggering undertaking was made possible by certain internal factors: (1) the continuity of the political leadership under the conservative and defense-minded guidance of Brezhnev, (2) the rejection of the unsettling ideas of economic reform, (3) the general revival of the bureaucratic party machinery, and (4) the imposition of a stringent ideological discipline. All of these factors conspired to create a favorable climate for a military build-up.

The growth of Soviet military power had profound implications: (1) American strategic predominance was ended and the threat of nuclear escalation was losing its credibility in the critical European theater, (2) the risk in undertaking local adventures by the USSR or Soviet clients was reduced, and (3) regional crisis became more likely and more unmanageable. International turmoil resulting from various causes— independent of superpower relations—was aggravated by the shift in the strategic balance, in part because the political consequences of the waning of American predominance became more widely recognized and appreciated by other actors.

Thus, the end of an era of experimentation in the Third World happened to coincide with the end of the era of Soviet strategic inferiority. The conjunction of these two events around 1975-77 was a recipe for major conflict (as had become apparent when an unusual opportunity presented itself in Angola).

As already discussed, a central issue between the United States and the Soviet Union was whether a relaxation of tensions, manifested primarily in arms control agreements, could be accompanied by, or contribute to a moderation of the expansionist tendencies in Soviet policy, especially in conditions of strategic-nuclear parity. This issue had been addressed in 1972 in the Joint Principles signed in Moscow at the time of the SALT treaty. It was believed then, at least by the American proponents of the policy, that a combination of incentives and penalties could be constructed that would create a Soviet political and

⁴ Abraham S. Becker, *The Burden of Soviet Defense: A Political-Economic Essay*, The Rand Corporation, R-2752-AF, Santa Monica, CA (forthcoming).

economic stake in restrained conduct and a psychological disposition in the Soviet leadership to test the possibilities of greater cooperation with the United States. There was always a healthy skepticism about this goal in the Nixon Administration, but the strategy adopted was to seek an overarching bargain in which Soviet expansionism would in practice be contained and restrained by a number of political, economic, and military arrangements, reinforced by the political implications for Moscow of the American opening to Peking.

In addition to the incentive created by the pressures of the Sino-American rapprochement, the Soviets seem to have been intrigued by the possibilities of a more stable and enduring relationship. It is worth recalling the tone and texture of Brezhnev's remarks at the high water mark of détente. In July 1973, Brezhnev spoke of a new view:⁵

Indeed, is it possible to overestimate the fact that the USSR and the USA, the two powers holding most of the world's stocks of nuclear weapons, have agreed to refrain from the threat or use of force against each other? . . . It is really impossible to overestimate this! I have already said that if we had limited ourselves only to one agreement with the USA, the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, we would, even in that case, have accomplished a great deal

The best way of defending peace is to continue actively pursuing our policy of peace, to *continue our*—as people now call it—*peace offensive*.

At its Plenary Meeting in April, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union instructed the Political Bureau to carry on its vigorous effort *to implement the Peace Program in its entirety and to make irreversible the favorable changes that are now being increasingly felt in the international situation*

This compels us to *take a new view of some issues*. We are now *working to determine new objectives and new horizons of our policy*

No single event led to the collapse of this optimistic prospect given by Brezhnev, but a series of changes occurred in 1974-76 that in their collective effect eroded political support in the United States for the Secretary-General's "peace programs."

- The expected new economic arrangements between the United States and the USSR negotiated in 1972 died in early 1975

⁵ L. I. Brezhnev Speech on Receiving the Lenin Peace Prize, Moscow, July 11, 1973, in *FBIS/USSR*, July 12, 1973, A7-A8.

with the passage of restrictive U.S. trade legislation and Soviet rejection of the linkage between trade and emigration.

- At the same time, there was adverse reaction to the Vladivostok agreement on strategic arms limitation, which encountered intense and unexpected criticism in the United States. This had the effect of hardening the negotiating process as some new, unsolved issues—cruise missiles and the Backfire bomber—emerged. The result was that an early conclusion of a formal treaty would be delayed into a American election year, an ominous portent in itself.
- The U.S. position finally collapsed in Indochina with no serious U.S. effort to halt the North Vietnamese attack in either South Vietnam or Cambodia, which must have suggested to Moscow a further decline in American power and resolution. As Brezhnev summed up at the Party Congress in 1976: "Imperialism failed to destroy a socialist state by armed force and to crush a national liberation revolution."⁶
- The revolution in Portugal in April 1974 not only opened serious prospects for a popular front regime in a NATO country (which perhaps might influence post-Franco Spain as well), but also removed the last obstacle to the collapse of the Portuguese empire in Africa where the indigenous anti-colonial forces in Angola and Mozambique were already ideologically tilting toward Moscow. The stage was set for a power struggle in Lisbon, for Angolan civil war, and for the Cuban-Soviet intervention.

THE CHINA FACTOR

Finally, for the Soviets there was the problem of China. There seems little doubt that the Soviets anticipated that the death of Mao in September 1976 would open up a potentially decisive opportunity for influencing Chinese policy. Their own experience taught them that a succession period was a time of uncertainty when a new leadership might shed some of the old inhibitions and repudiate the dogmas of former leaders. The myth that the Chinese communists were different had been shattered by the Cultural Revolution, and over the decades a succession of political figures had appeared—Gao Gang, Peng Dehuai, Liu Shaoqi, Lin Biao—who allegedly were sympathetic to the Soviet Union. While great clouds of ideological obfuscation have surrounded

⁶ "Brezhnev's Report to the Congress," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. 28, No. 8, February 24, 1976, p. 5.

these various Chinese political feuds and purges, the Soviet leaders had some reason to believe that a more pro-Soviet leader could, perhaps, arise out of succession politics.

In the aftermath of Chairman Mao's death in early September 1976, a pause ensued that was clearly deliberate on Moscow's part. In a speech to a Central Committee plenary session on October 25, 1976, Brezhnev stated:⁷

I want to emphasize that, in our opinion, there are no issues in relations between the USSR and PRC that could not be resolved in the spirit of good neighborliness. We will act in this direction. The matter will depend on what stand is taken by the other side.

The Soviet negotiator on the border problem was given a well-publicized return to Beijing, and a Soviet message of congratulations was sent to Hua Guofeng on his assumption of the Party Chairmanship on October 7, 1976. The Sino-Soviet probing and maneuvering that followed in 1977 eventually came to naught. By the spring of 1978 the United States was activating the "China card;" Deng was launching his pragmatic four modernizations program, and the Sino-Japanese treaty negotiations were moving toward completion. Moreover, the Chinese had rejected the proposal for negotiations with Moscow to develop principles of relations. Thus, the stage was set for a Soviet political counteroffensive which began by the association of Vietnam with the Council for Economic and Mutual Assistance (CEMA) in June 1978, leading to the Soviet-Vietnamese treaty of November.

In sum, by early 1978 the Soviets ended the transitional period that began after the Helsinki Conference. They were moving toward a new course which picked up the thread of the Angolan intervention and extended it through a series of opportunistic and aggressive moves.

THE NEW COURSE: FROM ANGOLA TO AFGHANISTAN

It would be foolish to claim that in this new strategy all of the steps were foreseen or necessarily planned in advance. Nevertheless, there were certain features that suggest a broad pattern:

- There was a significantly greater willingness by the USSR (and its satrapies) to use force, to encourage violence, to employ subversion, and to stimulate major armed conflict.
- There was a stronger tendency toward supporting and encouraging indigenous "socialists," who were distinctly pro-

⁷ *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. 28, No. 43, October 25, 1976, p. 9.

Soviet (Neto, Mengistu, etc.), even at the expense of sometime allies in the radical nationalist regimes (e.g., the switch to Ethiopia from Somalia).

- There was a greater willingness to accept broader consequences beyond the immediate area of conflict, i.e., to accept risks to relations with the United States if necessary.
- Finally, there was the first use of major Soviet military components in a local conflict.

The actual episodes in the evolution of this strategy are briefly recapitulated below.

Angola

The opening move was the encouragement of the civil war in Angola in early 1975; almost certainly the Soviet calculation was that a conspiracy could be arranged between the radical, leftist elements in the new Lisbon regime and the local communists led by the MPLA, under Agostinho Neto. By turning over weapons to the local MPLA, the departing Portuguese army could ensure the outcome in any fighting that might occur. And this was the tactic in early 1975 when Neto's forces attacked his colleagues in the coalition government. By early summer, however, the plan was faltering; the forces of the FLNA and UNITA were counterattacking and gaining ground. The MPLA was in danger of defeat, and a major increase in Soviet arms was required to save the situation.

A decision was also made to bring in Cuban troops, and they eventually began to have an effect on the battlefield. This had to be a Soviet decision; such a risky undertaking, completely dependent on Soviet logistical support, could not be a Cuban initiative; nor is it likely that Havana could force Moscow's hand. It seemed, however, that the MPLA would still be defeated and in November-December 1975 the United States and the Soviet Union began maneuvering in a way that brought the conflict into the realm of superpower politics. In early December, the Soviet airlift to Angola was briefly halted in the face of public U.S. warnings. A political dialogue had already begun with the Soviet Ambassador, and a negotiated settlement seemed possible to leading American authorities. The U.S. Congress then intervened to stop further American clandestine military assistance, and the situation quickly collapsed. Cuban forces prevailed, at least to the extent of occupying the major strategic junctions and the built-up areas. The anti-communist forces melted away or were routed. The Soviets had won the first crucial battle of the new strategic campaign.

At the time it was often argued that the entire affair was merely an aberration; that its implications or consequences were confined strictly to the immediate area; that the Cubans would either be withdrawn, as Castro frequently hinted, or would become bogged down in a quagmire.

This was demonstrated to be totally wrong; first in the spring of 1977 there was a minor and unsuccessful incursion into the Zairian province of Shaba (Katanga). It was staged from Angola, and though it was turned back it was nevertheless a portent of a more aggressive use of the new base in Angola. A more critical test came in the winter of 1977, when these same Cuban forces spread into Ethiopia.⁸

Ethiopia-Somalia

On November 13, 1977, it was announced that Soviet advisers were being expelled from Somalia, where the Soviets had created a major political foothold and had established a large naval base (at Berbera). It seemed that the optimistic prophecies had once again come true; the Soviets could not retain a permanent presence in the Third World. The opposite happened to be the case. Cynically and pragmatically, the Soviets were in the process of shifting their weight from the weaker Somalia to the potentially stronger and more ideologically compatible Ethiopian regime of Colonel Mengistu. Thirteen days after the dramatic Somali announcement, a Soviet airlift began carrying Cuban forces and Soviet equipment to Addis Ababa. Eventually, the Cuban forces under Soviet command drove the invading Somali tribesmen out of the disputed Ogaden. Again the Soviets had resolved a regional dispute by direct intervention, had gained a new strategic encroachment,⁹ but had paid no significant price in its Great Power relationships.

The United States in this period continued, for example, to negotiate an Indian arms control scheme with the Soviets; the United States was reported as taking a "cool approach," because (so the argument went), the Soviets were pursuing a policy which was destined to collapse of its own weight. With the advantage of hindsight, however, President Carter's National Security Adviser Z. Brzezinski correctly noted that the SALT II treaty was buried in the "sands of the Ogaden."¹⁰ One analyst summed up the American reaction as follows:¹¹

⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski agrees that this was "the critical time of testing in Soviet American relations. . . ." *New York Times*, January 18, 1981.

⁹ Eventually, the Soviet navy established an anchorage in the Red Sea at the Dahlak Islands, which permits a longer time on station for its Indian Ocean fleet.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, January 18, 1981.

¹¹ Dimitri Simes, "Imperial Globalism in the Making," *Washington Review/Special Supplement: The Horn of Africa*, March 1978.

Finally, the impression today is that the Soviet Union is acting in Africa as if American reaction was irrelevant. Their early experience with the Carter administration has probably persuaded the Soviet leadership that they are dealing with a hostile, yet indecisive, counterpart. The administration's half-hearted and confused statements regarding the possible linkage between SALT and Soviet actions in the Horn of Africa predictably had little impact on the pragmatic and tough-minded Soviet leader. American protests against Soviet actions are irrelevant largely because they carry neither threats nor promises of rewards relative to Soviet actions.

The Gulf of Aden

The Soviet Union was now in a position to control the outlet to the Red Sea. Of more immediate importance, it had created a new position from which it could reinforce an older, long established foothold that was showing signs of instability—the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). As early as 1955 the USSR had established a relationship with the Imam of Yemen, and in the 1960s the USSR had supported Nasser's intervention in the Yemeni civil war. Even after Egyptian disengagement from Yemen, the Soviets managed to retain a position with the radical PDRY, which emerged as the southern half of Yemen. Soviet military supplies arrived periodically, and a political relationship developed.

One of the major unsettled issues, however, was whether South Yemen would eventually be drawn back toward unification with North Yemen, arranged under the auspices of Saudi Arabia, or would remain in the radical camp. The Soviets naturally encouraged the latter course. The Soviets even found it possible to maneuver in such a way that they could offer and supply military equipment to *both* halves of Yemen, without completely sacrificing their major position in the south. Nevertheless, the trends were potentially adverse. The PDRY established relations with Saudi Arabia. In March 1976 PDRY President Salim Rubayyi Ali paid a state visit to Riyadh, the PDRY withdrew its support from the sputtering radical rebellion in the Omani province of Dhofar, and talks proceeded toward Yemeni unification. There were even signs in 1977 of a rapprochement between Aden and Washington.

An important Soviet position thus appeared to be threatened. But a chain of strange events conspired to avert a Soviet defeat. The President of North Yemen was assassinated on October 11, 1977, and replaced by a somewhat more pro-Western leader. Subsequently, there

was apparently some internal disagreement in Aden over what policy to follow in response to this turn. This internal dispute in the early months of 1978 also involved, among other issues, the orientation of the PDRY toward Moscow. Rubayyi Ali was inclined to move away from the Soviets toward a Saudi connection and to develop some links with North Yemen. He was opposed by the head of the Yemeni Liberation Party, Abdel Fattah Ismail, who was supported by Defense Minister Colonel Antar and Prime Minister Ali Nasser Muhammed. In May 1978, Admiral Gorshkov paid a formal visit to Aden, bypassing meetings with Rubayyi but meeting with Colonel Antar, who returned to Moscow with him. The Foreign Minister then departed for Havana (June 8-17). After their return bizarre events unfolded.

It seems that Rubayyi was arranging a secret link with the new President of North Yemen, al-Gamashi, and had dispatched a secret messenger to Sana. The messenger was intercepted (by Rubayyi opponents), however, and a new messenger was substituted by the Ismail faction. The result was that a bomb exploded in al-Gamashi's office (delivered by the unsuspecting messenger), killing the messenger and al-Gamashi. Rubayyi, realizing that he had been compromised, tried to stage a military coup. But the effort was put down, probably with Cuban troops involved. In any case, a new and even more pro-Soviet regime emerged which incidentally stepped up military pressures on North Yemen. A friendship treaty was signed with Moscow in October 25, 1979. The Soviets were apparently given permission to use naval facilities in the PDRY. Eventually, Ismail was shunted aside in April 1980 by the loyal Ali Nasser Mohammed, who was feted by Brezhnev a few weeks later. As one observer noted, "South Yemen had progressed from being a client state of the Soviet Union to the status—for all practical purposes—of a Soviet colony."¹²

The Afghan Coup

Two months before the coup in Aden, on April 27-28, President Daud of Afghanistan was overthrown by a Marxist-Leninist group that had close ties to the Soviets. The two events—the coup in Aden and the coup in Kabul—were strategically related though probably coincidental in timing. Nevertheless, there must have been a new spirit of aggressiveness in Moscow that condoned, if not actually encouraged, these upheavals. Any coup in Kabul, in particular, would touch raw nerves in Moscow, which after all is Afghanistan's northern neighbor.

¹² J. B. Kelley, "The Kremlin and the Gulf," *Encounter*, Vol. LIV, No. 4, April 1980, p. 87.

In any case, the Afghan coup was a critical turn. The U.S. Ambassador only a few weeks before had pronounced the situation stable and under control of the government of Daud. (This is not meant to ridicule the late Ambassador but to point up the probability that the coup was triggered by outside intervention.) What happened is still something of a mystery. Among the possible factors leading up to the coup was the unification of two communist factions which had quarreled for years. The two factions, the Khalq and the Parcham, had joined forces several months before the actual coup, probably at Soviet urging. A second factor was the orientation of Daud's policies, which seemed more and more pointed toward a non-Soviet alignment and a rapprochement with Pakistan and Iran. This may have stimulated the communist forces. Daud visited Sadat after the latter's trip to Jerusalem, and stated at one point that he was seeking "true non-alignment" and was opposed to Cuba's "so-called" non-alignment. Daud also visited India and Yugoslavia, and the non-aligned conference was scheduled for Kabul in 1978. Finally, some observers saw a definite Soviet role in the events.¹³

In the aftermath of the bloody coup, an internal struggle developed between the factions. Eventually the Khalq, led by Mohammed Taraki and Hafazullah Amin, prevailed over Babrak Karmal, who was exiled to Prague as ambassador and then removed entirely. (His whereabouts thereafter are rather mysterious, but probably he was in Moscow.) The new regime under the Khalq was, however, satisfactory to Moscow and matters took their course, so that on December 5, 1978, the USSR and the Afghan government signed a new treaty. It spelled out a new relationship, including the development of "cooperation in the military sphere," respect for Afghan non-alignment, a prohibition against joining groups or other alliances directed against either of the two contracting parties, and an obligation to consult. A similar treaty had been concluded a few weeks earlier with Ethiopia. (The Afghan treaty was later cited, of course, as the legal basis for the Soviet intervention in December 1979.)

In sum, by the end of 1978 Moscow had carved out a new strategic and political position in an area of great strategic importance. The Soviet Union was on the flanks of the vital oil lifelines of the Middle East. And perhaps it was a portent of Moscow's new forward strategy that the USSR staked a new claim to "security interests" in Iran, as expressed in Brezhnev's warning to the United States in November 1978 against interference in Iran. One could not help but recall the Czarist and Soviet claims to a special zone of influence in northern Iran,

¹³ Theodore Eliot, "Afghanistan After the 1978 Revolution," *Strategic Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Spring 1979, p. 57.

as well as Molotov's insistence that the Persian Gulf was the "focal point" of Soviet aspirations.

The Sino-Vietnam War

At first glance it might seem that these events in the Middle East and South Asia were totally unrelated to the growing crisis in Indochina. But a case can be made that the two were linked in Soviet strategy.

A few weeks before Mohammed Taraki arrived in Moscow to sign the Afghan treaty, another visitor had been there to sign another treaty—between the USSR and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (on November 3, 1978). This treaty, of course, had more immediate and drastic consequences. There is the likelihood, however, that the Soviets were moving in Central Asia and in Southeast Asia as well in order to break out of what appeared to be a new anti-Soviet encirclement—a product of shifting Chinese policies in the post-Mao era. It featured the revival under Deng of more pragmatic internal economic policies, with the clear implication that China would modernize its military establishment with European and even some American assistance. It also featured a more aggressive Chinese diplomacy, reaching out for links to Western Europe, to Yugoslavia, Iran, and above all to Japan and the United States.

The Soviets made a strangely feeble effort to block the Chinese offensive, without success. In May 1978 the visit to Beijing of President Carter's National Security Adviser Brzezinski signaled a renewed effort toward "normalization." Brzezinski's public linkage of Ethiopian events and the China card must have seemed ominous to Moscow. Shortly thereafter, the Japanese and Chinese reached agreement on their peace and friendship treaty in August 1978, which signaled the end of any lingering Soviet hopes of breaking up this new coalition by diplomacy.

It is in this light of an evolving coalition against the Soviet Union that Moscow signed what amounted to a blank check for the Vietnamese to invade Cambodia, to humiliate and defeat China's most prominent client. The contingency of Chinese intervention against Vietnam must have been discussed during the treaty negotiations in Moscow. In the event, however, the Soviets did not invoke military force in support of their clients in Hanoi, for several reasons. The Chinese attack against Vietnam demonstrated some major deficiencies in the military performance of the People's Liberation Army. The Chinese forces became badly bogged down, and thus had only marginal impact on the course of events in Indochina. One can speculate that the near

fiasco of Beijing's border war with Vietnam and the implicit threat of Soviet retaliation led the Chinese to adopt a defensive political strategy in the aftermath of the war. True, they abrogated the Sino-Soviet security treaty of 1950 in April, but in the diplomatic exchanges that followed the Chinese finally agreed to open negotiations, which began in September 1979. This fact had the effect of at least leaving the door open to more serious discussions. Neither China nor the Soviet Union were eager to foreclose their options.

The immediate outcome for the Soviets was another strategic gain. They apparently had bargained with Hanoi over the price of Soviet support and had acquired use of air and naval facilities at Cam Rahn Bay and Danang on an "increasingly regular basis," according to an American official.¹⁴ In March 1980, moreover, a Soviet frigate called at the Kampuchean (Cambodian) port of Kompong Som for the first time and a flotilla of ten ships was concentrated in the South China Sea.

An American official summarized the consequences as follows:¹⁵

Through their increased access to these [air and naval] facilities, *the Soviets have significantly enhanced their military capabilities*, not only in Southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific but also in the Indian Ocean.

Miscellany

There were a number of other events which are somewhat obscure but could fit into this thesis of a new Soviet course: The second invasion of Shaba province of Zaire in the spring of 1978 would seem related to the general Soviet offensive. Despite their strident denials, the Soviets and Cubans had to be the instigators of the invasion, or at least to have acquiesced prior to the invasion. Once again the limited consequences of their action may have reinforced the Soviet view that such probing held little risk. It was this invasion that prompted President Carter's commencement address at Annapolis on June 7, 1978, in which he challenged the USSR to choose between confrontation and cooperation. The Soviets responded by attacking U.S. policy as fraught with "serious danger" for the entire course of international relations. The Soviets also warned that the "concept of confrontation holds no promise . . ." The upshot, in any case, was that American policy did not change significantly.

¹⁴ Richard Holbrooke, "Crisis in Indochina," *State Department Current Policy*, No. 51, March 24, 1980.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

The Afghan Invasion—and its Strategic Implications

The definitive narrative of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan remains to be written. Though the main events are known, certain myths seem to have developed, especially in the United States and Europe, to explain events in a manner that minimizes their strategic significance.

First, there is the claim that the invasion was the result of a temporary victory by Kremlin "hawks" who prevailed over Brezhnev and Kosygin (who may, in fact, have been ill). The tendency to explain unpleasant Soviet policies as the result of unidentified sinister forces is as old as the Soviet regime itself. Even Stalin was occasionally exonerated of blame by such knowledgeable observers as George Kennan and Averell Harriman, who kept speculating about Kremlin hardliners. But in the Afghan case, Brezhnev was active and healthy during the period of the actual invasion. No evidence since then suggests that he was overruled; indeed, the first definitive defense of the events was issued in Brezhnev's name. Kosygin also returned to public activity none the worse politically, though he subsequently resigned because of his health and died shortly thereafter. It appears that the decision was not the result of a struggle between hawks and doves. Weighing the potential strategic gains against the imminent and drastic losses, who in the Politburo would have been so bold as to oppose the invasion? There may indeed be divisions in the Politburo, but they are more likely to emerge as the Afghan war goes badly.

Second, there is the idea that the invasion was only "defensive," and therefore a move of limited significance. There is, of course, something to this thesis, but it also is misleading. It is almost certainly true that the Soviets saw their clients collapsing and that the alternative seemed to be a fundamentalist Islamic regime, perhaps even aligned with Iran. The Soviets did not want two infectious Islamic revolutions on their borders. In this sense they had to take some action. Moreover, the fact that it was a communist government that was endangered sharpened the consequences of a collapse. The Soviets could not allow a communist ally to disintegrate on its very frontier. But having decided to act for "defensive" reasons, Moscow acted in an "offensive" manner; in other words, it exploited the situation for Soviet strategic gains by using massive forces and putting pressure on Pakistan and Iran. Indeed, the long-term aim must be to bring the entire area into the Soviet political sphere. Despite a great deal of hostility toward Pakistan, the Soviets have also offered "security assurances" to Islamabad.¹⁶

Third, there is the notion that the Soviets miscalculated the conse-

¹⁶ *Washington Star*, October 3, 1980.

quences, especially the American reaction. This too is debatable.¹⁷ Supposedly, they had been warned several times by the United States against intervening. Nevertheless, they tried a political coup in September that failed, and the Chief of Staff of the Soviet ground forces was in Afghanistan for two months surveying the situation. So, the Soviets must have made some calculations about the risks and penalties. Their last-minute grain purchases in the U.S. market suggest that they anticipated a possible retaliatory cutoff. And in retrospect, the unusually vehement Soviet propaganda campaign against the NATO decision to deploy Pershing II missiles and cruise missiles in Europe makes one suspicious that they wanted a diversionary issue to justify their coming actions under a rubric of provocations by the "imperialists." It may be that Brezhnev's announcement in October to withdraw 20,000 troops from East Germany was intended to cushion European reaction to the growing likelihood of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (and to some extent it succeeded).

In any case, as matters turned out the Soviets paid a limited price. The Western allies of the United States did not uniformly support the grain or technology embargoes; the Olympic boycott was a ragged affair. The shelving of the SALT treaty may have been of limited retaliatory value, although this remains an open question. The Soviets must have seen the treaty's prospects as increasingly less promising and, in any event, its ratification at a price of increased American defense spending was no longer worth it. The non-aligned and Islamic reaction began strongly, and gradually weakened. By February 1981, the Afghan government was accepted as a negotiating partner. Considering both the significant strategic gains in Afghanistan and the minimal price, the Soviets indeed seemed to have made a correct set of calculations.

An analysis of the war itself is difficult; the public reporting seems confusing and contradictory, and the various announcements are self-serving. American reporting in particular keeps applying Vietnam lessons and thereby risks the wrong conclusions about actual events. There is the constant assertion that the Soviets have become bogged down. This certainly remains to be seen. But there are some arguments against the quagmire theory. The Afghan rebels are disorganized and poorly armed. They evidently have limited outside political and material support. The Soviets are perfectly capable—politically and militarily—of fighting a long and bloody campaign. Predictions of Soviet disaster have appeared regularly, but gradually the Soviets seem to be gaining greater physical control, while engaging in political ma-

¹⁷ See especially the excellent analysis by Seweryn Bialer, "A Risk Carefully Taken," *Washington Post*, January 18, 1980.

neuers to neutralize the reaction in Europe and in the Muslim world. They have succeeded in defusing much of the early crisis atmosphere. As a major international issue, Afghanistan seems to have dimmed when Chancellor Schmidt went to Moscow and returned with a new offer to negotiate arms control in Central Europe and President Carter revived support for SALT in the American election campaign. One could not help comparing Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. Both were more or less eclipsed by new Soviet negotiating offers to Western Europe.¹⁸

¹⁸ By November 1980, Afghanistan seemed to be the "forgotten war." See Michael Getler, *Washington Post*, p. A12, November 4, 1980.

IV. SALT: CORNERSTONE AND CASUALTY

An immediate casualty of the Afghanistan invasion was the SALT II treaty. It was temporarily set aside, ostensibly out of deference to the antagonistic political atmosphere in the Congress in which its defeat was all but certain. As the realities of the American election process intervened, it became increasingly obvious that the revival of SALT in an unaltered form was problematical; and its ultimate demise seemed increasingly likely after the election of President Reagan. The unanswered question was whether, after ten years, the "process" of strategic arms control would also expire? And if not, could it continue without adapting to the radically new political environment of the 1980s.

When the Nixon Administration took up the issue of the SALT talks, which it inherited from the Johnson Administration, it did so with considerable wariness.¹ In contrast to the enthusiasm among the professionals, the Nixon White House had strong doubts that SALT could serve its avowed purpose, namely, that it would add significantly to strategic and political stability. Indeed, the fear was that SALT would become a "safety valve," and, increasingly, that Soviet confrontations and encroachments would be countenanced in the name of perpetuating SALT. The advocates, on the other hand, argued that SALT was imperative because nuclear weapons had no political utility.²

The neglected truth about the present strategic arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union is that in terms of international political behavior that race has now become almost completely irrelevant. The new weapons systems which are being developed by each of the two great powers will provide neither protection nor opportunity in any serious political sense. Politically the strategic nuclear arms race is in a stalemate. It has been this way since the first deliverable hydrogen weapons were exploded, and it will be this way for as far ahead as we can see, even if future developments should be much more heavily one-sided than anything now in prospect.

This view had generally prevailed in the United States. It was reflected in the doctrine of assured destruction, in the insistence that

¹ Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1979, p. 137.

² McGeorge Bundy, "To Cap the Volcano," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 48, No. 1, October 1969, p. 9.

any SALT talks were better than none, in the argument that talks should start as soon as possible and, finally, in the demand that in the interest of successful negotiations the United States forgo major weapons programs: especially ABM and MIRVs. Moreover, the received truth seemed to be that arms control agreements would be successful primarily to the degree that they were comprehensive; partial agreements were less valuable than broad ones; longer term better than a shorter duration, etc.

The history of SALT I has been explored at length. Some generalities seem to be in order before turning to an examination of SALT II.

The SALT process, from the initial round in November 1969 through the Vladivostok meeting, was conditioned on the American side as much by international geopolitics and domestic politics, including the politics of national defense, as by the give and take at the bargaining table or by the implementation and negotiation of strict arms control criteria. Thus, the United States made a number of important proposals in SALT I that were prompted by larger aims. For example, the first proposal to limit ABM sites to national capitol areas is described by Kissinger as a "first-class blunder." Yet it ended the divisive Congressional debate that threatened the entire defense budget. It made political (and even arms control) sense at the time; the United States could not force through an adequate ABM defense; the U.S. position met the general criterion of reducing armaments to a harmless level while retaining the option for R&D in some guise that seemed rational.³

Similarly, the agreement to freeze only ICBMs, rather than persist in negotiations for a comprehensive agreement, was an effort to exploit Soviet weakness when events in Eastern Europe (the Polish riots of December 1970) had made the Soviets ready for some basic progress on the eve of the Soviet Party Congress. The breakthrough of May 20, 1971, was as much a product of maneuvering on the larger board of international politics as a move in the arms control arena. Even a number of insiders failed to grasp the strategic circumstances of the May agreement (in part because of ignorance of the China initiative). Nevertheless, an ICBM freeze also conformed to the traditional arms control wisdom.

Increasingly, therefore, the United States saw SALT as a major element in the broader process of altering the relationship with the Soviet Union. A series of linkages was developed between Berlin, West

³ The larger question of whether defenses should have been limited at all is still debated. In 1969-70, it is almost certain that the United States could not have gotten the funding for an ABM without proving first that limits were not negotiable. Once having embarked on that path an agreement was inevitable.

Germany's Eastern treaties, European Security negotiations, MBFR talks,⁴ SALT, and the Nixon-Brezhnev summit, so that all the separate threads could be brought together. The strong feeling was that SALT should be regarded as part of a "process"; that it was only the first in a series of agreements that would flow from the more basic change in relations. SALT, therefore, was of less interest for its technical achievement than for its political impact in the USSR. The agreement was supposed to create a vested interest in the process. This line of defense and argumentation was basically accepted: SALT I was overwhelmingly approved; the criticism was mainly for its failure to meet an ideal standard. Thus in the ratification debate, the comparison was not between SALT I and no agreement, but between SALT I and a hypothetical agreement that would reflect true "equality." The success of SALT proved to be its own worst enemy, and this was a surprise to the Nixon White House. After decades of hostility, the first agreement to limit strategic arms was met with public enthusiasm, but also by political admonitions to improve the next version. Thus the ratification law passed in the Senate (known as the Jackson amendment) dictated that in SALT II there would have to be equal levels.

This was a fatal error. It was a commentary on the past rather than a valid prescription for the future. It failed to take into account that technology was moving so rapidly on both sides that the problem of numbers would soon be meaningless. In a world of multiple warheads and increasing accuracies, the problem of mutual vulnerabilities, and especially the problem of strategic stability, took on new meanings.

In his memoirs, Kissinger described détente and SALT thusly:⁵

We needed the (SALT) agreement if we wanted to catch up in offensive weapons. But we also needed SALT if we were ever to explore the possibilities of peaceful coexistence. We would have to be vigilant to maintain the strategic balance. But SALT also gave us the opportunity to determine whether détente was a tactic or a new turn in Soviet policy.

The growing politicization of the American debate made this test increasingly difficult and, finally, irrelevant.

Although the insistence on "equality" was a highly constricting factor, it would have been manageable in ordinary circumstances. In the circumstances of Watergate, however, the domestic political constraints were compounded. Equality, which had been put forth as a simple device to define a new agreement, was gradually transformed

⁴ Mutual Balanced Force Reductions.

⁵ Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1979, p. 1245.

into a series of increasingly difficult technical propositions; namely, that the Soviets should also agree to equality in missile throw weight or in the MIRVed throw weight of their ICBMs. In either case, what was implicit was a major Soviet reduction in the principal element of their strategic power, at a time when other aspects of the relationship were eroding and thus reducing Soviet interest in justifying strategic concessions for political reasons.

Nevertheless, the Soviet interest in pursuing the American option (partly because of China, as already discussed) produced some interesting possibilities even in the midst of Watergate. Indeed, the last Nixon negotiations in Moscow and the Crimea were perhaps the most intellectually interesting arms control exchanges of the period. They dealt with balancing a tradeoff of unequal levels of MIRVed missiles in the U.S. favor against unequal overall numbers favoring the USSR. An outcome limiting *all* Soviet MIRVs to less than 1000 in 1974 might have had a significant impact on the subsequent course of both SALT and Soviet-American strategic relations (it should be compared with a 1200 MIRV ceiling incorporated into SALT II) signed five years later. But Nixon's political position was not strong enough in July 1974 to draw the Soviets into such a major agreement involving Soviet concessions, and, to his everlasting credit, he did not try for a cosmetic agreement.⁶

The collapse of these negotiations involving asymmetrical arrangements returned the negotiations to the basic question of equality. Gerald Ford, as a new President, quite correctly decided that meeting the major criticism of SALT was of more immediate importance than developing a more intricate and, therefore, time-consuming agreement. Thus the Vladivostok meeting yielded equal numbers (a 2400 limit on strategic delivery vehicles), but little more. Yet the original SALT philosophy was preserved at a time of great political uncertainty; SALT was still to be a continuing process and no particular agreement should or would determine the final outcome. In the aftermath of the Vladivostok meeting, the administration stressed that the agreement would be followed by further agreements, using the Vladivostok accord as a basic framework. The idea of a gradual growth in strategic stability persisted. In 1975-76, however, the actual treaty negotiations faltered, technically and politically. On the technical level the appearance of the so-called grey area systems—the cruise missile and the Backfire bomber—demonstrated that technology was still developing more rapidly than diplomacy. Moreover, there was no conceptual framework to encompass weapons that were not purely strategic; but leaving them aside was increasingly difficult to justify. Inevitably they became

⁶ Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, Grosset and Dunlap, New York, 1978, pp. 1031-32.

linked and came to constitute an almost separate negotiation. Also, once these issues had been engaged technically, by debating about capabilities and possible limits, the political prestige of the parties gradually became engaged, so that compromise was no longer a function of technical resolutions but of political will.

The issues were never that complicated, but political compromises could be conceived and justified only in the name of some higher political or strategic objectives. In the period of the Angolan crisis, the U.S. incentive to break the negotiating deadlock for purposes of international stability (so to speak) was gradually reduced. In January 1976, when the last serious negotiating round took place in Moscow during a Kissinger-Brezhnev meeting, the United States was already near the limit of its ability to complete SALT in the name of superpower stability. And this aspect was greatly complicated by the domestic political constraint. Backbiting and leaking to the press in Washington were becoming increasingly severe. In an election year, especially in view of the challenge to the Ford Administration on the right within the Republican party, SALT has to be weighed in a new light. Would it advance or damage the SALT "process" to engage in an intra-party dispute in a national campaign? Could an effective treaty be completed in this atmosphere? Could internal bureaucratic divisions be reconciled in a political year? The final answer, decided by President Ford, was to set aside SALT for completion in 1977. In retrospect it was probably a mistake; it damaged SALT and may have cost him the election.

It is an interesting comment on the changing mood in the United States that when SALT was put on hold, there was no great outcry, as there had been only two years earlier in the summer of 1974. The constituency for SALT had weakened. In the period of Angola, SALT could be sustained but only by a major act of political will. The case for SALT as a separate and distinct contribution to strategic stability was even less persuasive. If SALT was to be revived, it would or should have to be in the context of a broader redefinition of Soviet-American relations. In other words, Angola had demonstrated that the problem of restraining Soviet behavior still permeated and infected other aspects of Soviet-American relations. Appeals to the abstract principle of reducing the danger of nuclear war through arms control lose their power in a period of geopolitical conflict.

In 1977 the Carter Administration failed to appreciate this. Freed from the constraints of the previous bureaucratic and international maneuvering, the Carter Administration had a relatively free hand in determining whether or how to proceed with SALT. Because the administration regarded SALT narrowly, i.e., completely justified on its merits, it concentrated on negotiating solutions, rather than on a broader Soviet-American strategy. The internal debates as well as the

negotiating record have been laid out in some detail in the well documented *End Game*, by Strobe Talbot.⁷ Comments may be in order on the initial period for what it reflects in terms of Soviet-American relations and on the final outcome.

The initial Carter proposals of March 1977 attempted to reconcile two competing themes: first, the desire to resolve the issues quickly in order to move forward, an echo of the idea of treating SALT as a continuing process aimed at improving geopolitical stability. The second strain was a realization that the strategic balance was evolving in a direction that made SALT potentially irrelevant. The threat to strategic security was not simply a new "arms race," but the ability of the Soviet Union to pose strategic challenges to American retaliatory capability (by threatening the Minuteman missile). The Vladivostok accord had circumvented this issue on the grounds that the agreement would be completed in 1975 and new negotiations would begin. By the spring of 1977 this tactical plan was questionable. Hence the Carter Administration formulated two alternatives: a quick Vladivostok-type agreement deferring the contentious issues, or a broader, more comprehensive, agreement that would at least address the strategic issues of growing Soviet capabilities against American ICBM silos. Both proposals were put to the Soviet Union, but only the latter received major publicity. Its presentation and tactical handling were poorly prepared and created an unnecessary and unwanted air of confrontation. The comprehensive offer was roundly attacked by Gromyko much more so in public than in private. American critics were also vocal, from both the right and the left; the latter suspected a disguise to kill SALT, a weird suspicion in light of subsequent events.

Even some of the more severe SALT critics, however, acknowledged that the approach had a substantive validity to the extent of forcing the major issues.⁸

The violent Soviet reaction should have been a warning. Gromyko's unique press conference of March 31, 1977, indicated that SALT could not be decoupled from the politics of Soviet-American relations; the Soviets would not accept a break with the negotiating history simply because there was a new administration in Washington: "This is the line of revision, a line of revising the commitment taken in Vladivostok," Gromyko said. But the Soviets did, in fact, come around to the "line of revision" in certain departures from Vladivostok in the final

⁷ Strobe Talbot, *End Game, The Inside Story of SALT II*, Harper and Row, New York, 1980.

⁸ See Paul H. Nitze, John F. Lehman, and Seymour Weiss, *The Carter Disarmament Proposals: Some Basic Questions and Cautions*, Special Reports, Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami (undated), Library of Congress No. 77-803-30, p. 15.

agreement. An important portent nevertheless was the fact that the Soviets recoiled from what were the more profound questions of strategic stability. Would the Soviets bargain over strategic advantages achieved with so much effort over 10 to 15 years? Gromyko strongly implied that they would not.

Thus, it was clear in the spring of 1977 that any early agreement would be of the same gender as Vladivostok, and that the major military question would have to be taken up later, unless the administration was prepared to sustain the political burden of a long stalemate. The decision was to formulate a compromise (in which this writer participated). This was a crucial error, not so much for the original content of the compromise, but because its political justification rested on the achievement of a quick agreement permitting an immediate transition to SALT III. In fact, however, the negotiations were allowed to drag on, so that the original virtue of the compromise—essentially a holding action—was gradually undermined.

Had a final agreement been reached in, say, the fall of 1977, its political fate almost certainly would have been more promising than in the fall of 1979. On the other hand, in the face of the incursion into Zaire and the Soviet-Cuban intervention into Ethiopia, SALT should have been suspended.

Secondly, the original concept of the compromise was gradually eroded by new realities. Initially the idea was that each side would temporarily restrain the weapons' programs of most serious concern to the other, while deferring a final solution for a later time. Thus, in the compromise the United States would restrain its long-range cruise missile deployment for three years (through 1980) except for those deployed on heavy bombers, and the Soviets would restrain their new ICBM testing for the same interim period. The threat of the new generation of Soviet missiles would thus be delayed if not stymied. But the strategic reality was that the Soviets could still pose a threat to the Minuteman ICBM, albeit in a more complex and laborious form. In the process of trying to frustrate the Soviets, however, the United States would also temporarily agree to rule out its most important strategic option, the new M-X missile. The result was that along with the SALT negotiations a parallel struggle was conducted over American defense options: how best to protect U.S. land-based missile forces—by a mobile deployment of a new ICBM (the M-X), by reducing the Soviet threat via SALT, by ABMs, or by some combination. The final outcome reflected in the SALT II treaty protocol left little of the original rationale. Land- and sea-based cruise missile deployments were suspended as originally proposed (although proceeding in another context in NATO), but one new ICBM would be permitted for each side and the option of deploying it as a "mobile" missile was specifically permitted.

The irony was that SALT, having failed to achieve the major arms control package of March 1977, produced a conglomeration of measures that virtually ensured an explosion in offensive weapons. SALT would drive the United States in the direction of deploying several thousand new launch points for a deceptive ICBM basing of the M-X, in part because the threat from the Soviet side could no longer be contained through SALT. This simple fact, probably more than any of the esoterics of the negotiations or even disquiet over some of the lesser but contentious provisions, marked a significant turning point in SALT.

Seven years after the original agreement and almost five years after the Vladivostok agreement, SALT was still addressing the prime strategic issues only at the margin. These flaws in the scope and depth of the agreement exposed a vulnerable flank to SALT critics. The debate then degenerated: what was being debated was not only the merits of the treaty's particular provisions, which was understandable and to be expected, but the synthetic choice between SALT or no SALT at all. It was natural that the Congress would shy away from such stark choices and turn toward the remedial defense measures the United States could take to maintain the avowed objectives of strategic parity and equilibrium. The net effect was a proliferation of supplementary defense proposals, programs, and budget additions that made SALT itself less and less relevant to preserving strategic stability, which would now be achieved by unilateral American programs rather than through agreements. Indeed, the final irony was that the SALT limits on Soviet ICBM warheads came to be cited as the guarantee that the M-X program (which was produced by the basic deficiencies of SALT) could survive an attack. Thus it was necessary to ratify SALT in order to limit the threat to a new American ICBM, which would be produced in part because of the deficiencies of SALT!

It is little wonder that the agreement was increasingly vulnerable. The same agreement negotiated and signed in, say, 1975 or even 1977 probably would have been accepted in the Senate. By late 1979 its additive value in terms of the overall objective of strategic stability was dubious (this does not mean that it was necessarily more dangerous than no agreement, which is another debate).

The suspension of the ratification during the American election campaign shifted the focus to the wrong issue and produced, in part, the wrong answer. President Carter argued the old thesis that approving SALT was in the interest of reducing the danger of nuclear war, and therefore that the treaty had to be accepted in the name of preserving the process. Candidate Reagan at first argued that the treaty was fatally flawed, but as the campaign developed he also adopted the concept of a continuing process by advocating immediate negotiations to begin reductions in SALT III.

The question of the disposition of the actual SALT II treaty was important. Whether the treaty was fatally flawed or not was a highly subjective judgment, incapable of proof. The more telling argument, used especially by conservatives, was that the treaty was not "real" arms control because it allowed a major increase in weapons. Advocates of the treaty thus were forced to argue the abstract case that it was better than no agreement, because then even more weapons would be produced, etc. This debate simply demonstrated that the treaty itself was probably marginal to the central strategic issue, and whether to ratify was largely a matter of what general strategy was going to be pursued vis-à-vis the Soviets.

Another more telling argument also became irrelevant; namely, that SALT was a soporific that narcotized the United States to the Soviet threat and led to supine military programs. In fact, by early 1981, SALT had witnessed a rise in six successive U.S. budgets, even though the ABM treaty was still in force, SALT I was still being observed, and SALT II was not officially dead. It was becoming easier to make the opposite argument: that SALT was the vehicle for growing arms appropriations (also a misleading charge)—much of the increase was for general purpose forces brought on by the turbulence of the Third World rather than for countering Soviet missiles.

The real issue was whether the process of negotiated strategic arms limitations contributed either to strategic stability or to political accommodation. The new Reagan Administration implied that it had strong doubts; by reviving "linkage," it suggested that merely improving an existing agreement or even moving into a new one could no longer be justified because of the intrinsic merits of SALT as a separate measure of strategic stability.

Unfortunately, the answer seemed increasingly to emphasize reductions in strategic arms because this supposedly qualified as "real" arms control. Undefined reductions could be even more dangerous than the modest SALT II approach. Reducing U.S. ICBM launchers, for example, in return for reducing Soviet ICBMs would simply compound and accelerate the vulnerability of the U.S. systems. Adding reductions in other categories, especially bombers carrying cruise missiles or Trident submarines, would seriously cripple U.S. strategic capabilities, even if matched by Soviet reductions. In short, at the current and prospective levels, reductions of strategic systems as a general proposition would be one of the most dangerous and destabilizing outcomes, or be one of the most deceptive in creating a false sense of accomplishment.

Clearly what is required are specific and partial arrangements that attack sources of strategic instability. The sensitivity of U.S. land-based ICBMs is theoretically capable of solution by the elimination of most of the Soviet MIRV force. If, as seems likely, this is unrealistic,

then SALT should concern itself with regulating a process on either side that would permit such vulnerability to be greatly reduced and eliminated. In other words, SALT could create an agreed framework to ease the problems of deploying mobile or transportable systems, including the deceptive basing for the M-X.

Moreover, simply continuing the SALT process assumes that the defensive standoff of 1972 should be perpetuated. Perhaps it should, but an argument can be made that SALT should also concern itself with initiating a process of permitting certain defenses, including a hard point defense of ICBM fields. While the old anti-ABM arguments about instabilities and inducements to first strikes may be revived, they must be weighed against the apprehensions and uncertainties if both sides move to systems of several thousand launch points.

In short, the entire SALT process must be reexamined before proclaiming that the process must be preserved simply to avert an arms race or to achieve reductions.

V. THE OUTLOOK AND PROSPECTS

It is evident that 1980 marked the end of the "détente" era that began in 1963. Following the American election, which more or less ratified this verdict, a new policy has to be forged. Similarly, after the holding action at the XXVI Party Congress Moscow has to address its new strategic position. There are certain salient features of Soviet-American relations and the international situation that are likely to shape this next phase.

1. Containment of Soviet power has failed to a significant degree. The invasion of Afghanistan was a turning point, and raised the serious question of whether the USSR would increasingly use or exploit its superior military capabilities to advance its geopolitical objectives. If so, how can such a policy be effectively deterred or countered by the United States and its allies?

2. Strategic arms control, as a distinct enterprise separate from fluctuations in Soviet-American relations, seems to have reached a critical juncture. If it is revived, it will probably be in a sharply altered form, related more closely to specific instabilities of both strategic balance and regional balances, and "linked" to the general course of Soviet-American relations.

3. Military instabilities at every level are increasing: (a) For the first time the United States will have to abide a significant degree of strategic vulnerability for an extended period; (b) the theater imbalance in Europe has grown to the point that coping with it politically and militarily is likely to produce sharp divisions in the Alliance concerning how to balance both arms control and actual deployment policies; (c) regional military imbalances, especially in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, have dramatically increased since the removal of the Shah's government as a stabilizing power. The consequent entry of the two superpowers to fill the vacuum has opened a new strategic front, and its risks and opportunities can only be dimly perceived.

4. Political instabilities are increasing not only in South Asia and the Persian Gulf but in Central America, Southeast Asia, and South Africa; the probability of superpower involvement in more areas is likely to grow.

5. The major industrial areas are vulnerable to economic and political blackmail because of the energy crisis. This raises two geopolitical problems: the splintering of the industrial democracies into competing economic entities (e.g., the European Economic Community versus the

United States) in order to ensure oil supplies and, second, the creation of a new frontier for Soviet pressures and diplomacy to influence the attitudes and policies of Europe and Japan.

6. Finally, there is the paradox that the combination of Soviet political weakness and military strength creates a strategic "window"—an opportunity for the USSR to expand its power and influence at the expense of the United States because internal Soviet economic problems will accumulate to a point in the 1980s that a more benign foreign environment may seem advisable, if not necessary, for the new Soviet leaders.

All of the foregoing combines to reinforce the trend toward international turbulence and instability, which could create the conditions for a major confrontation between the United States and the USSR. The brief war scare of early 1980, when Europeans were debating whether the correct analogy was 1914 or 1939, was understandable because a classic definition of a pre-war situation is that the major powers can no longer impose order or gain control over events, and crises begin to multiply.

Against this background, Soviet policy in the near term seems likely to be fixed along certain general lines:

1. There are persuasive reasons for the Soviets to continue the political offensive begun in Angola unless and until they encounter a major setback or serious defeat. There can and will be tactical adjustments, of course, and only a rough timetable seems implied by internal economic constraints. But the general thrust of a forward, aggressive policy has been confirmed by success thus far.

2. The Soviet military buildup is *not* likely to be tuned down. Even if *some* moderation is required by economic considerations (which seems likely in the next several years), it will have little effect in the short term because current commitments to procurement and R&D have been at such a high level that the impact of cutbacks will not be felt for several years after a decision to cut back.¹

3. In Europe a selective détente, which is designed to exclude the United States, will be deepened if possible through expanded trade and through negotiations over theater arms control. The Soviets will try to develop a policy of cooperation in the energy field, i.e., the continuation of Soviet natural gas and perhaps oil exports in return for political

¹ See Harold Brown's comments to this effect in the *New York Times*, January 20, 1981. It is important to distinguish between Soviet reductions in defense brought on by internal political or economic reasons, which seem more and more likely, and reductions forced by fear of an arms race threatened by the United States. Soviet capability to compete in a race will remain formidable; further growth in Soviet defense is well within the capacity of the Soviet economy. The threat of a race if coupled with alternatives may have an impact on Soviet choices.

cooperation between the USSR and the European Community, and even cooperation on military issues in Central Europe. The course of events in Poland could radically change these calculations.

4. In the Far East, subtle pressures on China will probably be increased primarily through Soviet support for Vietnam, a strategic Soviet build-up, and through pressure on China's friend, Pakistan. Indeed, the neutralization of Pakistan, the friend of both China and the United States, is a major Soviet objective and would be a significant achievement; it would be a step in bringing the entire Southwest Asian area under Soviet domination, even if Iran, Pakistan, and India remain ostensibly non-aligned. Eventually the Soviets will want to test whether China has weakened in its commitments to the United States and whether apprehension of unchecked Soviet expansionism has reached the point that the Chinese might become interested in a limited accommodation with Moscow.²

5. All of these major Soviet policies are designed to leave the United States increasingly isolated from its major partners and in a weakened military position. Other than tactical maneuvers to shape American choices, e.g., during defense budget debates or internal NATO debates, major strategic overtures to the United States will probably not be undertaken as long as the Soviets remain convinced that the "correlation of forces" is favorable. This does not preclude active tactics, such as the series of new proposals made by Brezhnev at the Soviet Party Congress.

There are two important variables that are exceedingly difficult to calculate: the Soviet political succession and the state of the Soviet economy. These two factors could easily feed on each other.

The Soviet succession is becoming more and more hazy. An orderly change from Brezhnev has not taken place, and perhaps was deliberately deferred or rejected at the Politburo level in 1977, when Brezhnev became President and retained his Party overlordship. There is still no sign that he is preparing a successor. This may be politically impossible in any case; naming a crown prince in one's political lifetime is dangerous and the alternative of ensuring the line of succession after one's political departure is impossible.

The odds will grow against the succession as a transition by half steps; i.e., from Brezhnev to Kirilenko to a younger man. This is still the most likely, but the longer it is delayed the less likely that it will be effective. Thus, a disorderly succession period with frequent shifts

² Poland could be a catalyst. China might move toward the United States seeking a de facto military alliance; or, out of fear, it might try to appease the USSR to gain time, as it did in 1969. Brzezinski predicts a U.S.-China alliance; see the *Washington Post*, February 1, 1981.

in personnel seems more and more likely, which introduces an element of great uncertainty.

Succession periods, historically, loosen the political boundaries and new ideas are introduced. But the chances of overturning or significantly affecting the general conservatism built up in the Brezhnev era are certainly less than even. The more likely outcome is the continuation of a strong conservative leadership, resting on the support of the Party bureaucracy, the military, the KGB, and the heavy industrialists, rather than a more "liberal" group drawn from the technicians and government bureaucracy. Major economic reform, which might be the central domestic issue, seems less likely in such a constellation of powers.

The economic situation may reach a point, however, where deferring reforms or changes may become too dangerous. In previous periods, economic reforms were thought to be desirable, but events proved they were not mandatory. To some extent this was because there was still some economic margin for maneuver and for error. It now seems that the Soviet Union is simply too close to the margin. In other words, the manpower shortages will not disappear, oil will not magically be discovered; hard currency and technology will have to be sought out; foreign debts repaid, and so forth.

For the West the intriguing question is whether these kinds of pressures on a new political leadership will direct attention toward reducing enormous commitments of scarce resources to national defense. The question cannot be answered with any assurance; there are too many political and economic variables, and considerable analysis needs to be done on what the Soviet situation is likely to be in the late 1980s. It needs to be underscored, however, that for the past 35 years the Soviet Union, with only a brief interlude after Stalin, has had a steady commitment to military power. It would take a leader of extraordinary strength to change this strategic direction. And such a decision would probably flow less from realities of the Soviet economy than from the costs and benefits of the foreign and defense policies being conducted at the particular time.

Thus we arrive at the ultimate question for the United States: What can be done to influence Soviet relations with the United States?

It seems likely that the United States will have to return to a policy which might be called selective neo-containment.

Ironically, the first containment doctrine was attacked for being too sweeping, embracing too much, when in fact it was largely a European-centered concept, but applied in Korea. Now, however, neo-containment will have to cope with what is truly a problem of global dimensions, but will have to do so very selectively because of the strain on American resources. Soviet encroachments have to be denied in areas

of strategic importance, but not in every place, at all times. Drawing these distinctions will be the essence of strategy.

The immediate impact on resources is already evident in the creation of what amounts to a third theater of confrontation. In addition to the Pacific and Atlantic basins, including the Mediterranean, we now have a Soviet geopolitical challenge directed toward the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. This alone creates new strains, forces choices among objectives, and imposes new burdens not only on the United States, but on its allies. Neo-containment thus must begin with a restructuring of Atlantic relationships.

For some years the United States will be unable to meet its political obligations and commitments with its current military forces; even with progress toward a rapid deployment force for the Persian Gulf, conventional Soviet military pressures cannot be countered in sufficient time with adequate forces. The United States, however, has a critical geopolitical requirement to reassure its friends and allies in the area. It may be possible, as a stop-gap, to agree on a "new division of labor" that would permit NATO countries individually, and not necessarily as Alliance members, to offset U.S. naval and air force requirements in South Asia, or better still in Europe or the North Atlantic. A common assessment and strategy is the political prerequisite.

In elaborating the new requirements of containment, U.S. policy will labor under certain new inhibitions. For the Europeans détente has become a major element of their policy. This European détente is to be sheltered from the effects of extra-European crises, as was evident in European behavior in the Iranian and Afghan crises. Thus if the Europeans now join in the building of a neo-containment policy, they will insist on and probably achieve a greater voice over American policy toward the Soviet Union. The dilemma for the United States is whether European interest in arms control and détente in Europe can be made compatible with a vigorous containment policy against the Soviet Union in the Third World, especially in the Middle East/Persian Gulf.

A somewhat similar situation will develop in East Asia and the Western Pacific. The ability to carry out U.S. commitments will inevitably be strained as the new requirements of neo-containment are added. New American bases, perhaps in Australia, seem inevitable. The effect on aircraft carrier deployments will have an effect in turn on Japan. Gradually, Japan and other U.S. allies will have to take on more of a burden, further diluting U.S. freedom of action.

Perhaps most significant, there is the impact on Sino-American relations. The logic of neo-containment is to draw much closer to China, making them more concessions in technology transfer, arms sales, and other forms of military assistance. This carries an increasing danger of provoking a Sino-Soviet confrontation, if the Soviets perceive that the

United States is intent on pointing Peking toward a strategic build-up. It is also possible that the USSR will engage in a serious try for an accommodation with Peking to break up a Sino-Japanese-U.S. alliance. What of the longer term question about the balance of power in East Asia? What are American interests in a world that is characterized by a military build-up of *both* Japan and China? Increasingly, the flexibility of the triangular diplomacy of the 1970s could be replaced by the rigidities of confrontational-type policies.

There are also the expanding involvements that come with creating a physical infrastructure involving new U.S. bases in Somalia, Kenya, Oman, and perhaps Egypt. In 1947-49, the United States undertook new commitments in areas where there was some cultural or political commonality that could be transformed into a military alliance. But the new range of obligation pulls the United States increasingly toward extremely volatile regions, where long-term commitments may become increasingly dangerous. The governments of Greece and Turkey in 1947 at least enjoyed a considerable legitimacy but can the same be said of Somalia and Oman? Moreover, how will the new alignments withstand another Arab-Israeli crisis? Will they alter the older commitment to Israel? Will arrangements in Kenya withstand a crisis in South Africa?

In short, U.S. commitments are expanding while the ability to meet those commitments is more limited than ever before and the freedom of political action will become increasingly constricted and complicated: dependence on European allies shades American policy towards accommodation with the Soviet Union. But the China card pulls toward confrontation.

And what of the USSR itself? The role of negotiations, the scope for accommodation and indeed its desirability, are necessarily the vaguest part of an American neo-containment policy. The old debate, whether the Soviet Union can be accommodated on reasonable terms, has been revived. Echoes of the original containment debates are reflected, for example, in Norman Podhoretz's "The Present Danger":³

... the Soviet Union is not a nation like any other. It is a revolutionary state, exactly as Hitler's Germany was, in the sense that it wishes to create a new international order in which it would be the dominant power and whose character would be determined by its national wishes and its ideological dictates.

In short, the reason Soviet imperialism is a threat to us is not

³ Norman Podhoretz, "The Present Danger," *Commentary*, Vol. 69, No. 3, March 1980, p. 39.

merely that the Soviet Union is a superpower bent on aggrandizing itself, but that it is a Communist state armed, as Solzhenitsyn says, to the teeth, and dedicated to destruction of the free institutions which are our heritage and our glory.

Lippmann's biographer, Ronald Steel, replies, also along lines that have a familiar echo:⁴

Now this [Podhoretz's view of the USSR as a "revolutionary state"] may well be true. But it is not an observation that offers much direction to American policy. It doesn't tell us what to do about Afghanistan, let alone the MX missile, Persian Gulf oil, and an economy reeling under the burden of geopolitical decisions made three decades ago and not seriously re-examined since.

Today we face serious problems with the Soviet Union. Not because it is ruled by fanatical Communists panting to grab our oil, but because lines of communications and mutual interest have virtually broken down.

The nature of the beast, so to speak, remains in question. As it was in 1947, it is a somewhat academic issue, though not entirely. This time, the United States needs to rethink the justification for, and objectives of, a longer term relationship with the USSR. What exactly do we expect: no change, an internal "mellowing," an upheaval, an abandonment of revolution, or a realization that the competition is too burdensome, that a prolonged respite is a prudent alternative?

Even while these abstract questions are debated, practical decisions are required, as they were in the late 1940s. The lessons of that period suggest that whether to negotiate should not be part of the debate. Then, the wrangle over waiting to build Western strength obscured the more basic question of what to negotiate. This time, we also have the added experience of the early 1970s when certain "principles" of relations were developed. Would a similar effort be justified? If so, how do we deal with the problem of enforcement; what incentive, if any, will the USSR have to restrain its conduct? Economic rewards no longer have a domestic American consensus, but the United States finds itself in the unenviable position that its allies are conducting an expanding economic relationship with the USSR and Eastern Europe, while the United States officially stands aside. The consequence, as demonstrated in Afghanistan and Iran, is that our allies are loathe to sacrifice their economic interests to support our geopolitical strategy. And, in turn, in their bilateral relations with the Soviets they are

⁴ "The Absent Danger," *New Republic*, August 16, 1980, p. 22.

developing some limits to confrontation (e.g., the Franco-German attitude toward sanctions over Afghanistan).

In sum, developing a "code of conduct" remains a possible Western objective, but it can no longer be a bilateral U.S.-Soviet proposition. If there is no concerted U.S.-European-Japanese strategy, the option will simply fail and, worse, produce another backlash.

But the alternative to a concerted policy of neo-containment may be an increasing drift toward confrontation and even war.⁵

In this broad scheme of things, is there a role for arms control? To answer this question, it is necessary to recognize that the traditional concept of arms control is increasingly doubtful.

First, securing political and strategic stability by limiting or reducing arms is simply no longer very credible. Strategic arms control decoupled from a supportive political environment is doomed. This is the lesson of SALT II. Former Secretary of State Muskie, a strong partisan of SALT, summed up the dilemma:⁶

The effect of Afghanistan, of course, is to escalate the possibility of confrontation between our two countries, and in that kind of environment, the limitation of arms, especially nuclear arms, is an important objective for each country. The difficulty is, how do we achieve it? While we are butting heads on the Afghanistan issue, how do we achieve at the same time a viable and credible negotiating posture on SALT? No one to my knowledge has come up with a solution to that problem.

But even in an environment of accommodation, stability may be jeopardized for two reasons. First, the level of strategic armaments already makes many limitations almost irrelevant. When both sides have about 10,000 strategic weapons (missile warheads and bombs), what does a freeze of one element or another mean? Indeed, what do reductions mean? The significance of a general agreement reducing arms by 10 to 15 percent would be almost entirely political or symbolic. It may have been a worthy aim early in the SALT process, but at this point symbolic agreements would simply add to domestic disillusionment. Moreover, reaching agreements in the name of a "political" accommodation requires a framework of mutual geopolitical restraint.

Second, technology now is entering a new era; even the layman recognizes that lasers, charged particles, and "stealth" weapons systems open new vistas for armaments that could easily outdistance the ponderous process of political negotiations.

⁵ A third alternative—a sphere of influence policy—is intriguing, but probably unworkable and certainly undesirable in the abstract.

⁶ Address before the Foreign Policy Association on July 7, 1980, *Department of State Bulletin*, August 1980, p. 30.

In any case, it is likely that SALT *per se* will have to be laid aside in favor of a new mechanism for negotiation that would include the weapons systems located in and around Europe as well as intercontinental weapons. The United States can no longer draw a distinction between its concept of a bilateral strategic balance and the European regional balance. The two are intimately linked, particularly in an era of strategic parity. They have to be negotiated in some relationship. Weapon developments alone—cruise missiles, Backfire bombers, FB-111s—make this relationship inevitable, to say nothing of Soviet insistence on treating U.S. forward bases in the next round of SALT *and* in the theater nuclear force negotiations.

Not only are the composition and political character of the negotiations changing but their scope may also be open to review. The old theory that viable defensive systems threaten strategic stability by adding an incentive to strike first needs to be reexamined in light of first-strike capabilities being acquired on both sides. It may be that under examination it will prove impossible to devise an equilibrium in which defenses are built up and offensive systems stabilized or gradually reduced (assuming that the USSR would have such an interest). In any case, however, it would seem that on both sides defensive systems (ABM) will attract new interest, especially as alternatives to extremely costly offensive systems (M-X).

There is also the impact of what appears to be a new stage in the "delicate balance of terror." Both the United States and the USSR seem to be moving, inexorably, toward doctrines and forces that provide more "war-fighting" options. This has been recognized for some time as a characteristic of Soviet policy, and is now being adopted to a significant degree by the United States.⁷ It has the effect of putting a higher premium on secure command and control, on survivability of forces, on reserve forces, and on combating any possible defensive breakthroughs. It also means that major adjustments in the balance through arms control become exceedingly difficult.

In sum, arms control is entering a new era. All of the implications have not been analyzed. The political situation, the tensions of neo-containment, and the competition in strategic systems will probably once again drive negotiations in the direction of talks for the sake of alleviating tensions, rather than stabilizing a new balance. This is already evident in the long-range theater nuclear force negotiations, which have as their rationale the satisfaction of Western European fears of another "cold war," rather than any military- or political-strategic interest. This could be a recipe for disaster.

In any case, the fundamental question remains. Will the successful

⁷ This is acknowledged in former Secretary of Defense Brown's comments on PD-59, made on August 20, 1980, at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island.

application of containment policies, the checking of Soviet advances, the rearmament of the West, and the skillful manipulation of negotiations produce that basic change in the USSR which underlies all Western hopes?

The answer may lie in the nature of the Soviet imperium. The British maintained an empire for centuries because they were animated by a cause, derived some material gains, and successfully resisted international external challenges. The Soviet empire is composed of two elements: the core in Eastern Europe, and an outer ring in adjacent areas, at some distance and embracing quite different cultures. The core of the empire is clearly weakening, economically and ideologically. Soviet domination of Eastern Europe 35 years after World War II is based almost entirely on Soviet troops and the threat of force. The limits and risks of such domination were demonstrated in Poland in both 1970 and—much more drastically—in 1980. The new outer circle is held together by Soviet material assistance and by a feeble element of ideological commitment. It provides no economic return to the Motherland, and, increasingly, the outer circle is composed of outposts for the Soviet army and its proxies. Some of these positions have been lost and replaced by others (Ethiopia for Somalia, Syria for Egypt). This is historically an untenable situation. Finally, the cost of empire is threatening to become excessive in terms of the prime objective of strengthening Russia itself.

These strains are gathering but their culmination still lies somewhat in the future. The interim may well see the optimal moment for Soviet expansion before a period of decline sets in. That is the "present danger." And negotiating this dangerous period is the American challenge.

POSTSCRIPT ON POLAND

The bulk of the foregoing was written prior to the upheaval in Poland and the emergence of the free Polish trade unions. This is clearly a major event in postwar history. The crisis poses truly fundamental challenges. Can the USSR permit a free institution in a totalitarian political structure? Can it be limited to one institution, without infecting the entire structure? Can it be permitted to flourish in Poland but not East Germany or the USSR? The answer is clear: Free institutions are incompatible with the Leninist system; they must either be emasculated or eliminated. Emasculation has failed, which leaves intervention.

At first, the Polish opposition (Solidarity) seemed convinced that

Soviet intervention could be avoided. The Solidarity leaders have learned much since 1970: Their tactics have been carefully calibrated, their aims cautiously circumscribed, and their longer term goals sufficiently ambiguous to avoid a clear-cut challenge. In early 1981, the situation began to deteriorate. The challenge remains fundamental, however. A military regime might be tolerable to Moscow as a last resort. In the end, the cost of allowing the growth of a social-democratic state in Poland is too dangerous, even if the cost and risk of Soviet military intervention are high.

The significance of the crisis is that 35 years after the war the Communist system in Poland is completely bankrupt in managing the economy and in managing the political process—the Communists' only claim to legitimacy. Moreover, the ability of Moscow to transform its military gains of 1945 into an empire held together by a common ideology, common political institutions, and common interests remains a failure. This poses a continuing challenge to the Soviet power position in Europe and even globally. It reemerges at a time of gathering crises inside the USSR: the succession crisis, the economic crisis, and the uncertainties of relations with the USSR's major adversaries, China and the United States.

For the United States, the Polish crisis serves to underline the fact that Soviet-American relations stand at another historic crossroads. There is the clear possibility of further severe confrontations between the two superpowers, but there is also the opportunity to redirect relations. It seems evident that two components of American policy are essential: resurgence in military strength and containment of Soviet adventures. But the third, complementary component—diplomacy—has suddenly seemed more promising: That may be the meaning and significance of the Polish crisis.

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